

POPVLAR  
ERRORS,  
IN

Generall Poynts con-  
cerning the knowledge of

RELIGION:

Having  
Relation to their cau-  
ses, and reduced into divers  
observations.

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By Jean D'Espaigne, *Minister of the  
Holy Gospell.*

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LONDON,  
Printed for THO. WHITTAKER, at  
the signe of the Kings armes in  
*Pauls Church-yard, 1648.*







To the most Illustrious  
**CHARLES**, Monarch  
of great *Brittaine*, &c. Defender  
of the Faith.

**T**He deceased King, Father  
of your Majesty, was  
pleased to command  
the impression of a Ma-  
nuscript which was the  
first fruits of my Pen, on which hee

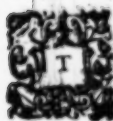
daigned to cast his eyes ; where in his  
Royall goodnesse had more respect  
to my zeale, then to the worke.  
This which I offer at your Majesties  
feet, carries its deniall on the front.  
But that the clemencie of him who  
was pleased to cast his eye upon the  
Hyssop, as well as upon the Cedars  
of Lebanon, makes me hope for a fa-  
vourable Aspect. I beseech the Lord  
God to accept your oblations, and  
make your Crowne flourish, and  
establish your Throne as the Sun  
it selfe.

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To



## To the Reader.



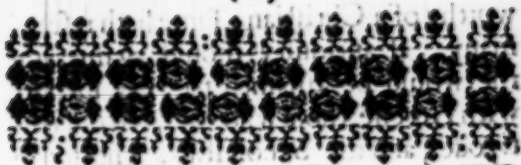
*His Treatise is nothing but a heape of observations very differing there, more especially where they are joyned; they are for the most part distant in respect of the subject. This is the reason wherefore I have only sought to range them in their proper places, and passe from the one unto the other, without giving them any other connexion, or closing them with other comment. I shall marke in the first place the nature and differentie of spirits, principally of the common people in matters concerning Religion; Secondly, the matters which are of the knowledge thereof. Thirdly, the forme and manner of this knowledge, and finally the meanes to obtaine it. In all these foure heads (which I have placed in as many sections) wee shall shew divers popular errors which serve for the subject of this Treatise.*

## To the Reader.

If this worke be triviall, it corresponds to its title, which promiseth nothing but popular matters, if defective, 'tis for having omitted that which many have often repeated; if clownish, this stufte is not capable of a more artificiall web, nor of the polifure of a more elegant stile; if rash, as shocking so many maximes held as Oracles among the people, and partly approved by the silence of the learned; weighing them in the ballance of the Sanctuary, we shall find that in matter of Religion, nothing ought to be more suspected then vulgar opinions; some think to understand very well their religion that will find themselves not only in a darke ignorance, but also in a den of Errors.

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The



## The first Section.

### CHAPTER I.

#### *The first Error which arose amongst Christians.*

**H**is report which was spread among the Disciples of the Lord, a few dayes before his Ascension, that St. John the Evangelist should not die, was the first Error that sprang up amongst the Christians. This opinion contradicted not any article of the Faith: and neverthelesse the Spirit of truth would have the censure thereof to remaine till the end of dayes, as a Pillar of Salt to season our conceptions. Each Error in things indifferent, is un-

worthy of a Christian. Time hath refuted many, if antiquity should again arise she would be ashamed to have marked with Heresie, those who believed the Antipodes, and the Scholasticks who tooke *Zona torrida* for the flaming sword which made the earthly Paradise unaccessible, they would find at this day these imaginations were more specious then veritable.

But I will lay aside all matters of this quality, you contest not here the common opinion which marks the nativity of our Saviour to be in the season of the winter Solstice, nor the oracles attributed to the Sybils, which if we must believe all that they say, have spoken of Jesus Christ more clearly upon the Tripes of Idols then the true Prophets upon the seat of Truth, Nor the histories which contain so many particularities of *Simon Magus*, which are for the most part fables. Nor the interpretation which takes the four living creatures described in *Daniel* for the four Evangelists. Nor the forme which they attribute to the crosse, which  
many

many say to have been of another fashion  
 then they represent at this day. Nor the  
 belief that *Adam* & the men of the an-  
 cient world were of giant-like stature, these  
 are problems we touch not, much lesse will  
 I speak of opinions of which you may see  
 amongst the dotages of old womens tales,  
 or that the Hebrew or any other tongue  
 be naturall, or that there hath been men  
 ingendred by devills, or whether witches  
 can transform themselves into wolves or a-  
 ny other species. There is none but sim-  
 ple Idiots who believe Lucifer to be the  
 name of the devill. And many say the  
 tree of the crosse without thinking on the  
 superstition, which hath produced this fa-  
 shion of speech, imagining that the crosse  
 on which our Saviour suffered was made of  
 the wood of the tree of life. The opi-  
 nions which I undertake to refute are of far  
 greater consequence, they concern the true  
 intelligence of Religion, instead of which  
 many embrace an ignorance reduced into  
 art sustained by maximes, which under  
 appearance of solid piety do infold di-

vers capitall errors, transforming men into stones, making superfluous the greatest part of the Scripture, and instead of Cherubins engrave upon the walls the figure of many unclean creeping things; of these maxims some are avowed by an expresse profession, others tacitely authorized by the common practise, not onely among the dregs of the people, but yet amongst many which are not separated from ignorants, but by the wainscot of a pulpit.

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## CHAP. II.

*Of the efficacy and differencie of humours upon the intelligency of Religion and of the strange opinions they produce.*

**I** Hold there are very few men altogether exempt from popular errors; the spirits the most pure have still a touch in some point of this contagion. The reason is, that man naturally seeks to conceive the truth of things, the nearest to the form of his own inclination, as he that would turn the course of his bow, turns his head on that side, to this contributes education



cation, old customs, and the multitude of voices, which stupifies the strongest brains. Now as the inclinations are different, the truth which is unick in it self appears in divers forms, according to the quality of the spirits, which conceives it, like the *Æthiopians* representing the ugliness of the devill, have a custome contrary to other people, they paint him white; so after this manner the diversity of humours produces diversity of conceptions and difference of opinions upon the same subject.

These humours some times carries away mens spirits to make them seek to be more perfect then God himself, some cannot perswade themselves that God is so severe as he saith himself to be, and being rouch-  
ed with an humour more pitifull, have found wherewithall to extinguish the eternall fire, teaching that the damned, nay more, that the devills after some time of suffering, in the end shall be freed from their torments, this so favorable an opinion hath gotten them the title of mercifull Doctors, but there is others who being of

a more cholericke religion, would be more rigorous towards sinners then God himself. For if some man through humane frailty have fallen under the burden of Persecution, and since raised from his fall, required the peace of the church, these would refuse it him, although he had sought it with tears of blood; as if they had had more interest in the offence, then God himself, or Jesus Christ who dyed for that sinner. Our Lord hath said, if you are persecuted in one place flee into another, some superabounding in zeal have judged the practice of this command to be unworthy a Christian generosity, nay more, a base cowardlinesse equivalent to a dissention of the faith, one of the chief writers of the Primitive Church hath set out a Treatise expressly in favour of this Paradox. The melancholicke humour so farre predominates in many, that their piety consists in sadness taking the wrinkles of the forehead for marks of Religion, and scarce will they believe him to be a good Christian that is not Hypochondriacall: Men  
the

the most pious have alwayes been different, in their fashion of life: some sociable and Politicke, others loving a retired life with fasting and austerity, to these two sorts of humours, which are the most generall (God himselfe by a wise indulgence) would deferre something, to the end, to draw all sorts of people to his Gospell; making them see two different Models, The one in *John Baptist*, a man of great abstinencie and austeritie, as well in life as in cloathing; the other in *Jesus Christ*, whose life was popular, and disdained not the table, nor conversation of the greatest sinners. But this could not universally please all men. The spots which appeare in the writings of the clearest authors shew oft-times the humour in which they dipt their Pen, which you may perceiue among many others in *S. Jerome*. Now these irregular impressions which nature formes in their spirits, goes not alwayes to so remarkable an excessse. But although a man be exempt from all grosse, and notable errors; nevertheless those truths which

which are lodged in his spirit have some taint of his owne humor; And there is very few men but that give unto religion some face or colour, or some posture according to their particular inclination. And if one might looke into their braines, you should see as many severall Ideas as you doe of faces.

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CHAP. III.

*Naturall humours taken for Christian vertues: and the particular spirit, for the Spirit of the holy Ghost: The divell falsely accused of all our evill thoughts: why it is hard for a man to know the time when he was regenerated, why certaine articles of our faith are more easie to our beliefe then others: why divine Revelations were communicated to men in their sleepe.*

**T**Hese naturall qualities oft-times deceive the clearest sights: the moderation which you see in many, proceeds rather from the heaviness of their flegme, then

then from a vertuous habitude; many are ardent in religion, and believe they have the Zeale of God, who if entireing into themselves, would find that the fire which heats them, proceeds from a naturall choler, farre different from true zeale; many take the combat of the conscience, for that of the spirit against the flesh, and security for the Peace of conscience. Many also are religious through a fearfull humour, proceeding either from the weaknesse of the sex, or the imbecillity of a scrupulous spirit, in things the most indifferent, making as much esteeme of an article of Discipline, as of an article of Faith, and flying superstition, through a superstitious feare.

There are some found, that are so addicted to meditation, that they almost fall into an extasie, so fervent and assiduall in prayers, that they disdain to descend from the Mountaine with *Moses*. or from the third Heaven with *S. Paul*, for to return to converse with men: some assure themselves of their constancie in the faith, upon

#1. naturall generosiry, the experience whereof discovers its weaknesse, making the most resolute courages to abjure at the voyce of a Maid, and teacheth us that martyrdom is a thing that man cannot promise to God. In generall a Christian ought to keepe himselfe from being deceived by these naturall qualities, like the Comets which have the forme and appearance of Starres, but yet are not fixed in the firmament.

There raignes two false opinions amongst those which are ignorant, upon this subject, that all the ill thoughts and wicked and blasphemous imaginations which passe through their braines against their will, proceeds from another spirit then their own, and accuse the divell thereof, which ought to be true in part, but I believe often-times they doe him wrong, for although there should have been no devils, the spirit of man is sufficiently fruitfull in monstrous absurdities for to produce such fancies, without the suggestion of evil angels; and 'tis not to be believed that

that Satan hath leave to enter so freely into all houses, or to enter into our Chambers and Cabinets whensoever he pleases, much lesse into our thoughts.

There is another familiar error belonging to many which take their inclinations, who have some morall goodnesse for an infallible marke of the Spirit of grace; of all those who have some light feeling of religion there is not one but doth believe, that he is already regenerated. Almost all because they cannot remember the time in which they have perceived so notable a motion, they presuppose they have been regenerated in their infantie, not having any other memorie thereof: And indeed it is very difficult for a man to discern the true moment of his conversion, in punctually noting the houre or the day. We perceive not how it is made in us in its first moment, nor have we any hand therein, no more then in our naturall production: If a dead man should arise he could not tell how he recovered life. Nay more, this regeneration is not wrought by a violent

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lent

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lent and remarkable motion, except in  
 H someone, as it was in *Paul*, as in those  
 who in the same houre from tormentors  
 became Martyrs, and as without doubt it  
 comes to passe in some whom God regene-  
 rates at the brinke of the sepulchre. Ordī-  
 narily the Spirit of God leads men insen-  
 sibly to the first point of Sanctification,  
 by many turnings and preceding dispositi-  
 ons, which in their beginnings are not to  
 be perceived, but many make themselves  
 believe they have been regenerated from  
 their cradle, which are as yet far from the  
 state of grace.

Nay, those, namely who have been a  
 long time regenerated, and have gotten a  
 sollid experience in spirituall things, find  
 themselves oft-times deceived by their par-  
 ticular spirit, which counterfeits the  
 voyce of the Spirit of God. These two  
 spirits intermingle themselves in many  
 actions. It was by the Spirit of God  
 that *Isaac* blessed *Jacob*, but in this, that he  
 believed that he blest *Esau*, and such was  
 his intention, it was the errour of his par-  
 ticular

particular spirit. It was by the Spirit of God that certaine Prophets told *Paul*, that bonds did attend him at *Jerusalem*, but the counsell they gave him not to goe thither, was a motion of their owne particular spirit, proceeding from their humane affection. All the dreames which came to the Prophets were not prophetically, they had markes by which they discerned the celestially visions from naturall impressions, to which they were subject as well as other men; In the same manner as the divine providence of God hath separated that which was writ by their particular motion, from that which was transmitted unto us by divine inspiration; The Spirit which dictated the letter of *David*, written with the blood of poore *Uriah*, was quite contrary to that which indited the Psalmes. *Nathan* counselling the building of the Temple, seemed, speaking like a godly man, but the consequence shewes he spake not like a Prophet.

It is most true, that neither sagacity nor humane affections reduced into a just

temper are not incompatible with spirituall wisdom; contrarily they serve for a helpe to our weaknesse: All the articles of our faith are equally true, but our beliefe embraces them not with equall facility. We have lesse trouble to believe a divine Essence, then a Trinity of Persons: the immortality of the soule; then the resurrection of the body; The reason is, that in the one we have nothing but a supernaturall revelation for the ground of our beliefe; and in the other we are moreover sustained by humane reason, which strengthens this faith: So our obedience is more voluntary in things to which wee have, besides the commandement of God, some naturall or personall inclination, then in those which are repugnant to our affections: I doubt not but *Abraham* obeyed more joyfully, when it was bidden him not to lay his hand upon *Isaac*; then when he was commanded to slay him. But in this concurrence, namely of the Spirit of God with our spirits, wee must marke these two principalls, the one of which is  
always

alwaies regular, and the other hath still some spice of obliquity.

A man addicted to his sence, and that adores his owne opinions will very hardly give place to the Spirit of God. Ordinarily Prophecies and Revelations came unto men then, when they were asleep; where God sent them those extasies, whilst they lasted they were as if deprived of all sence, which was because the soule is then dis-intangled from many functions, and freed from an infinity of thoughts and of objects which possessed it waking; being then lesse glued to their naturall judgement, and so more susceptible of the influence of heaven, and more capable to receive the impression thereof.

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## CHAP. III.

*Concerning the Sences : and of the imaginations : vulgar meditations : matters which seeme better in Painting, then in the words of the holy Scripture. why the corporall figure of our Saviour is not delineated in the Gospell : why the sight of the places (esteemed holy) takes away the admiration thereof.*

**R**eligion contains divers matters which for a simple historicall knowledge are intelligible to the externall senses : The starre which appeared to the wise men : the manger at *Bethlehem*, the crown of Thornes, the punishment of the Crosse, the Sepulchre of Christ, and his comming out thereof; the scarres of his Wounds, his Ascension to Heaven, are objects perceptible to the imagination : Nay, we cannot conceive the truth of the naturall body of Christ, but under an imaginable and sensible forme. But the internall forme of  
all

all these theologicall truths which is as it were the soul of Religion, is not apprehensible but to the intellect. The divinity resident in Christ; the personall union of the two Natures, the merits of his Death, the efficacie of his Intercession, the interest of the justice of God in this satisfaction; The eternall Election, the interior Vocation, Justification, the essence of the Faith, the regeneration, are matters purely intellectuall. In every narration, principally in each article of faith which lies in the Historie, there is ever two things requisite to the intelligence thereof; 1. The action with its circumstances; Secondly, the causes and the consequences thereof. Now the first point is better studied, and more sought into by the common people, as being more delectable to the imagination, and far easier to bee conceived then the other, which touches not the senses, and requires a more spirituall, and more laborious exercise of the understanding; from whence it comes to passe, that the science, the conception, the proofes and

#meditations of the vulgar are more ima-  
 ginative then intellectuall. A Deaths  
 head, the spectacle of a carkasse, or of a  
 dying man will represent our humane fra-  
 gility more lively then can doe all the  
 sentences of the Bible. But the supernatu-  
 rall causes of this corruption, and the con-  
 sequences thereof from whence results the  
 true intelligence of our mortality, they  
 are not read in such characters: A picture  
 may give knowledge of an action, but the  
 reasons and the motives in which lyes the  
 importance of the story asks another Pen-  
 fill. A Crucifix tells us not why Jesus  
 Christ died. Never man was yet conver-  
 ted by the sight of a picture. If that were;  
 Painters and Sculptors would be the great-  
 est Theologians. After the same manner  
 the sufferings of Christ reduced into a  
 Tragedy, and elevated by the highest co-  
 lours of Eloquence, what teares soever it  
 may draw from the auditors, will never  
 suffice for a saving knowledge.

If the true portraict of Jesus Christ re-  
 presenting his naturall face, were to be  
 found



found in the world, I would never blame the curiosity of those who would seek the possession, and who (all superstition set apart) would preserve it as one of the most precious jewels that the eye of man can behold. Many have thought, that they have the original, in an *Epistle of Lentulus* to the Senate of *Rome*, of which I will say no more, but that it is no Roman stile; Some others have drawne the Copy from the Monument of a fabulous history which speaks of a Statue erected in memory of our Saviour.

Howsoever it comes to passe, it is a strange thing that the Scripture which paints forth the stature of *Saul*, the haire of *Absalom*, the colour and visage of *David*, expresse not any figure of our Saviour. We find not therein the least Idea, nor any lineament, neither of his face, colour, aspect, stature, or yet of his voyce. But that by which he was discernable from other men, consisted not in his visible forme, or in any extraordinary difference of Lineaments, otherwise *Judas* had not needed

needed a signe to make him to be known; so that the representation of him at this day to the eye of flesh, would make him contemptible to him that would not conceive a divine Majesty under a common and indifferent appearance. Or it would be a Patron of Idolatry, which would not faile to multiply under so favourable a pretext. Our humane vanity would have added there to some frivolous and impertinent speculations of Physiognomie. Or superstition would cast its sight upon each man who should have some seeming resemblance of such a Picture. Or certainly the greatest part of Christians in stead of knowing Christ in spirit, and adoring him spiritually, would alwayes have his imagination tied to the corporall object, and his spirit disturbed with the fancy thereof.

Of thousands of men who returne from *Jerusalem*, or from mount *Sina*, or from the river of *Jordan*, and many other famous places mentioned in the Scripture, scarce can you find one which brings back the admiration, which he had conceived before he

he had seen them. The spirit of man hath alwayes a more reverent opinion of things which are ancient, then of Moderne: of those which are farthest off, then of those which are neare. The objects, the most excellent and sacred become contemptible by the facility and proximity of access: but those who goe out of a devout affection to visite *Palestine* or *Arabia*, carry with them for the most part exorbitant imaginations which sometimes passe to an excessse impossible in nature, thinking to find the third heaven in a cave, not considering that the innobling of those places, proceeds not from any quality which renders them either more holy, or more full of majesty then the other parts of the earth, but from the sole reputation of the wonders past under that climate, so that the sight takes away the esteeme thereof, because it answers not to the imaginations with which they were preoccupied.

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## CHAP. V.

*Of the difference and capacity of spirits: Of the faculties of the soule: Of those who promise themselves to beleewe, so that they have prooffe, and doe assure themselves they should have beleewed in Christ, if they had seene his Miracles; Of those who limit God, according to their owne wisdom, or beleewe the truth, because it is conformable to their owne opinion.*

**T**O dispute whether there bee Spirits more capable of Theologie then others, or whether the faculties of the soule are prevalent in this studie, are questions remote from our intention; without controversie the intellect is the true place of this science, although the vulgar imagine that there is more trouble to retaine a point of Religion, then to conceive it, and with rather the gift of memorie, then that of the understanding.

The knowledge of salvation is an effect of grace only. A single, historicall, and speculative

culative knowledge proceeds from a particular favour of God. But this grace destroys neither the naturall difference nor essence of spirits. God employes for our instruction, the objects, the senses, and the other faculties of the soule. Jesus Christ himselfe as hee was man became more knowing by experience; a man which hath the sense of hearing, from whence comes faith, hath a manifest advantage for the understanding of preaching; above that man whom God hath stricken with deafnesse; so there is no doubt but a good naturall understanding (presupposing the light of grace) knowes better how to conceive a matter of religion, and to weigh the importance thereof, and search into the causes, and to discover the consequences, then a spirit naturally stupid, and blockish; the greatest braines are ordinarily more slow to believe, then those which have but mean ones, as the highest Planets have the slowest motions, but their beliefe is more solid, when once they have known the truth; For God employes the same faculties

faculties for to produce an effect for which  
 they had nothing but a naturall repugnan-  
 cie : so that the most violent persecutors  
 become oft-times the greatest zelots of  
 the faith : whether the faculty of those  
 who believe more promptly be more wor-  
 thy of praise, it's a point we will not at  
 yet touch. The vulgar presuppose that  
 the Science of religion requires nothing  
 but a single apprehension or reception of  
 truths presupposed without any mixtion  
 of the discursive faculty, and without any  
 act of the judgement : many make scru-  
 ple of reasoning upon the doctrines of  
 faith, because that reason is nothing but a  
 naturall faculty. But this maxime in the  
 sence they give unto it is in effect contrary  
 to all reason : by the same consequence  
 they ought not to bring to Church, nei-  
 ther their eares nor common sence for to  
 discern the voyce and accents of the  
 Word which is preached unto them, nor  
 their memorie to retaine the impression  
 for these faculties, as well as reason are  
 purely naturall. I will leave what is to be  
 spoke

spoken upon this subject to come to some remarks. Scarce can a man bee found doubting of some point of religion, but he promiseth himselfe firmly to beleieve the truth, so that hee may see manifest and concluding prooffe, there is nothing so common as this voyce. If I see the prooffe, I will believe it: But they promise that which is not in their power: for every historicall faith it selfe is a gift of God: and saving faith proceeds from a particular favour of heaven. In the meane time they attribute unto themselves the power, thinking that the matters of the faith may as easily be insinuated into our beliefe as philosophical propositions, which have no need but of a moral perswasions, or of the evidence of the senses for to introduce them into our spirit: Whereas theologicall truths, the most cleare and palpable, are alwaies obscure unto us without a particular illumination.

With a like vanity many assure themselves, that if they had seene the miracles that God wrought in *Egypt*, or that *Iesus Christ*

Christ did in *Judea*, they would not have failed to believe in him. They wonder at the stupidity of the Jewes, and thinke that if such wonders had been presented to their eyes they should have been far from being incredulous: But certainly if a man should see all the rivers converted into blood, the Seas cleave in sunder, the Heaven open his gates, the Mountaines to remove themselves, the Sun stand still, the Dead to come forth of their graves, the Rocks to melt into water, when he himselfe should have been in Heaven, or should have returned from Hell, he would not have returned better if God gave him not another understanding capable of this faith.

Now the Idolatrie which formes God after the resemblance of man, consists not alwayes in Statues or materiall pictures, neither in the grosse conception of Ideots who never thinke of God, but in imagining some figure apprehensible to the sence, and place in Heaven a fantasme for the object of their contemplation. But there is one far more subtile, which indeed considers



siders God as a Spirit, but bounds him by the law of Nature, or restraines him to the same lawes which serve for bounds to the humane spirit, or confines his wisdom to the maximes of morall and intellectuall vertues.

Two things amongst all others, have seemed most absurd in the true religion, the one under the Ancient testament, to wit, the Circumcision, the other under the New, to wit, the Crosse of Christ, the one ordained for a Sacrament, the other for the foundation properly of the Alliance both of them shamefull in themselves, ridiculous in the quality the Scripture gives them. For God would oblige the wisest to search their salvation by a way that should be scandalous to naturall prudence, to the end that their wisdom should not undertake to controule his, which nevertheless happens without thinking thereon to the most religious spirits. The ancient Christians in their ordinaty prayers demanded of God the retarding of the

last day. This request was founded upon the comming of Antichrist, which they knew ought to preceed that day, which would bring with it many calamities, which they sought to keep from them by their praiers upon this, that the Assembling of the Elect, and the calling of so many people, would require a long space of time, and upon other reasons which was knowne unto them, but they tooke not heed that the holy Ghost, whose foresight surpasses that of man, commanded them to say, *Come Lord Jesus, come.*

For a close, we shall marke that in diuers matters of religion many submit their beliefe to the testimony of the Scripture, because that they find therein some reason or circumstance, which seemes to agree with their naturall judgement. They perswade themselves of the truth of an history, or the equity of a law, or the excellencie of a mystery, or the importance of a Sacrament, or the justice of a rigorous execution, for as much as they meet therein a certaine shadow, or an appearance  
confor-

conformable to the thoughts which are the most prevalent in their spirits, the faith proceeding thereof is vaine : as wee shall declare hereafter in its proper place.

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### CHAP. VI.

*Some say Knowledge produceth Atheisme, all here saies have not proceeded from learned men. The abuses of humane learning in religion.*

**T**He common people reproches Atheisme to the learned, and their scorning of all religion. An accusation, but too true in respect of many. Some doe so inclose themselves within the thoughts of a Science, or particular faculty, that their spirit cannot admit any principall higher then that of their owne art, from whence it comes to passe, that they know no other divinity then the matter and the forme, or the temperature of the body, or the vertue of herbs; or the law of nature, or nature it selfe. Others

although most speculative in the higher causes attaine not to the first.

But certainly we must impute this crime to their ignorance, not to their knowledge; for to say the truth, there was never **A**theist, but was ignorant: never a perfect Philosopher, but acknowledged a God, the most specious arguments that impiety ever displayed for to fight against this fundamentall point of religion, if we look neerly unto it, are nothing but popular reasons. And it is impossib'e to an Atheist to sustain his cause without disavowing some principalls of naturall reason. If Atheisme were grounded upon knowledge, the perswasion would be the stronger instead that its weaknesse is subject to a thousand doubts, which wearies those which are most obstinate; As I have scene in a learned man famous in his profession, who having called my selfe to comfort him in his sicknesse, assured me upon the (silence he exacted of me) that his health depended upon the resolution of a point which he never could believe, and asked the prooffe thereof

thereof, which was, if there were a God, a question so criminall, that cannot proceed but from a spirit full of Egyptian darknesse, what learning soever he hath in other matters. Againe, the vulgar charge the learned to have been the authors of all the heresies which have troubled the Church; complaining that all the errors have had the originall from their subtilties, who have seduced the common people, and which cannot proceed but from learned men. But we find two sorts of heresies. Some more artificiall and subtrill, which cannot proceed but from the invention of learned men, of this ranke, are those who have fallen upon the attributes, and the divine decrees. The predestination, the Trinity, the Union of the two Natures in Christ, and such like points. The others more grosse and stupid, as that of the Anthropomorphites. And these proceeds from imaginations of the vulgar. In generall Ido'atrye hath alwaies began by idcots.

Nay, the greatest part of popery, the invocation of Saints, the adoration of their

reliques, the worship of Images, the prayers for the dead have never drawne their originall, but from the superstition of the vulgar. In heresies the most subrill, the learned conduct the multitude; but in those whose stuffe is more grosse, as in the exterior practice and Ceremonies of religion, the people lead the skilfull who carried by a multitude, as by a crowd or a torrent suffer themselves to be lead to the very melting of the Calfe of gold. Nay, what is more shamefull, one hath seene learned and able men most grossly deceived by the imposture of idiots not only simple in matter of action, but moreover in things purely dogmaticall, without speaking of the gravity of *Tertullian* miserably seduced by the dotages of *Montanus*, nor so many spirits abused by *Priscilla*, and *Maximilla* pretended prophetesses. The learned who have believed something of Purgatory hath been brought to this beliefe by the revelation of silly devorious women, by the apparition of soules, that good people said they had seen with their eyes,  
by

by the Enthusiastes of some melancholy men, and by the recite of some Miracles, which oft-times were but effects of nature, as the nocturnall fires which often appeare in Church-yards. The errors of the first sort are knowne for the most part by the names of some chiefe Hereticks, which hath produced them. Thus the blasphemies of the Sabellians, Arrians, Euticheans, Nestorians, are marked with the name of their authors famous for having been Patriarkes of so many severall bands of hereticks, but the errors of the second sort have not so certaine a Genealogie, its not so easie to name the inventors of the offerings for the dead of the adorations of Saints, or of the service of Images, or the noting the time of their originall, because these abuses have bin generated from the confused medly of the common people, so that the true father of them is unknown. But a man may take notice of a familiar abuse in those who make use of humane learning; for in many religion takes some taint of their humours, so very

often they give it the bent, or a forme set  
set out according to the rules of the art  
which they exercise, or of some other  
Science with which they are indued.

In the greatest part of the Fathers wee  
find alwaies, either in matter or phrase  
something which smells of Platonisme, a  
Philosophie which they had dranke in  
with their studies.

Afterwards that of *Aristotle* came into  
favour, the Theologians have imitated his  
language, his countenance and his gate.  
The excesse to which this disguise obtai-  
ned, was never so put off, but many indea-  
voured to set it againe on foot. So we have  
seen many Lawyers and Phisitions who  
accommodate Theologie to the maximes  
of their profession, not only in the termes,  
or in the method (as when the one makes  
it personall, reall and active, the others  
Patholotick and Therapeutick) which is  
not of so great importance: but in the es-  
sence it self, and in the right conception of  
the truth thereof. So some measure the sin  
of *Adam*, the justice of his punishment  
the



the quality of grace, the satisfaction of Christ, the damnation of infidells by the Lawes and rules of Civill right, or by naturall equity, having as sleight a foundation as popular spirits, who conceive alwayes some point of their religion under maximes of their art or of the condition they professe, imploying them, not as simple comparisons for to inlighten, but as demonstrative proofes.

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### CHAP. 7.

*Why learned men receive the truth with more difficulty then other men, and if the promptitude of belief is alwayes most praise worthy.*

**T**He same which we have written of the most piercing spirits happens also to men of eminent knowledge; which is, that they are for the most part flower of belief in a point of Religion then ordinary men; & there must be more powerfull operations, and a longer time for to draw them to the tearmes of an intire perswasion, on  
which

which I will only say the most prompt belief is not alwayes the most firm. The faith of a man who receives the Gospell with a precipitated and easie approbation ought to be suspected of nullity, it is to be feared its rather credulity then sollid faith ; surely our Lord spake of certain auditors, who easily received the word with gladnesse but left it with the same facility which they had brought to its reception, the truth is alwayes open and never hides her face to the end that he who receives her may see what manner of guest he is to receive . So when a man begins to be illuminated in the first acts of this faith, he meets with an infinity of objections which hinder his resolution to an entire belief. But he which finds no obstacles therein never considers thereof in good earnest, far from having conceived the faith; a man who will sound the depth of Religion and know the bottome as far as man can discover, he who will learn all the measures of the Tabernacle and know the dimensions and the proportions, and weigh all the reasons  
which

which forbids the entrance, and those which invite him thereto; his pace will not be very fast, and will not come very soon to the altar. But if once he be enlightened by the light of the Sanctuary the slownes thereof redounds to his advantage. for belief is far more cleare being received *upon solid grounds* more sound; As lodging in a spirit *refined* from all that furcharged it, and more solid as having prevented by a ripe deliberation whatsoever might come to shake it.

In this tryall of religion the learned have alwayes helps which facilitates their understanding, and where they know to make use thereof they understand better the importance of a point of the law, or of the Gospell, the enormity of sinne, or the excellency of redemption, far better then the common people. That as they have more trouble to be perswaded, so they have more objections to be resolved then those which see not the difficulty thereof, but the perswasion being formed in them, possesse all those advantages which I have related

lated. And notwithstanding it is not altogether universally true, that the learned are the more difficult to believe the truth, the conversion of an idiot proves oftentimes more painfull and troublesome. A grosse ignorance incapable to comprehend the easiest matter, is the mother of stubbornesse; nay more, of presumption the enemy of all knowledge: Many refuse instruction because they believe they have knowledge enough. So that under the shadow of Christian liberty, an artificer censures what he understands not.

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### CHAP. 8.

*Why the learned are subject to more doubts  
then the simple people.*

**W**E find an infinite number of persons among the common people, who never doubt of any point of faith, nor of any other matter approved by the orthodoxall Church, whereas that ordinarily the most knowing men are full of doubts. Now its true, that believing and  
doubting

doubting are acts formally contrary: for distrust (although many teach it) is not of the essence of faith, no more then vice is not essentiall to vertue, and every sort of doubt is a testimony of our weaknesse, and a mark of ignorance. But it is easie to judge from whence it comes that popular spirits are not subject to so many doubts as the great Theologians: For as thier sight extends not it self so farre, so they see not all the difficulties which the other discover in the study of Religion; as for those who have never doubted of any point, it is of necessity that this great security of spirit proceeds from one of those two causes either of a perfect and transcendent faith, incompatible with all species of doubt, or from an extreame stupidity, which never comprehended the importance of a doctrine, nor ever sounded the depth thereof. A man who hath alwayes had an absolute and unvariable perswasion of all points of Religion without any contradicting thought, must necessarily be either An angel or a beast. This stupid confidence de-  
ceives

ceives an infinity of souls, especially in the personall application of their beliefe. Many hold themselves so assured of their salvation, that their spirit is incapable of doubting; but not through the excellency of faith, which requires a more exact triall but through an excesse of self love; from hence it comes to passe they willingly believe whatsoever makes for their advantage. But if they have no pertinent reasons, it is a most grosse presumption.

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## CHAP. 9

*Of common proverbs in generall and of certain maxims in favour of ignorance.*

**T**HE vulgar people governe themselves by certain maxims esteemed for oracles, but which are indeed as many approved errors.

The proverbs which belong to Oeconomie, exteriour policie, and to naturall prudence in the conduct of our lives, are nothing to our purpose, there are some which touch Religion, that are held for assured

assured principalls which have nothing but an abusive and fraudulent appearance; whosoever would make the inventory should discover a thousand absurdities. For all the proverbiall sentences which are at this day in use, have not been dictated by the mouth of the wise or from reason common to all men or from universall experience.

Ignorance hath brought forth many which are authorised onely by the credit of the multitude. And every man who desires to understaud very well his Religion, ought to take of these prejudicated proverbs, which at this time have course, such are the following maximes, to wit, *That there's no sin but with the will*, which is false. Originall sinne in little children, omissions proceeding from forgetfulnesse, the first motions which are not in the power of man, extravagant dreames, wandering and idle thoughts, doubtles, which trouble the spirit, are not voluntary, and notwithstanding are still sinnes. Idiots imagine that siene resides not but in the will,  
not

not considering that it hath its place in the Intellect it self, but this is to justifie that opinion which some hold that *Ignorance is no sinne, but when it is voluntary.* But the Law, the rule of our conceptions, obligerth ignorance namely that which is not voluntary to come under the expiation and purgation of sacrifices: which presupposeth a fault, Jesus Christ died as well for our ignorance as for our other sinnes. The holy language when it speaks of a sinner useth a terme, which signifieth an ignorant, the high priest prayed for the ignorants, that is he prayed for the sinners. The eye to wit, the understanding; is called evill although its malignity consists in nothing but in errour.

*That it is better to have piety then knowledge,* But knowledge is the best part of piety: the new man is renewed in knowledge: whatsoever any man may say, an ignorant man can never be a good Christian, all his vertues are none. Nay more, there is nothing so dangerous as an ignorant Zelot.

*That*



*That we have knowledge enough, and that nothing is wanting but the practice,* but if any one believe he knows enough, as yet he knows nothing, seeing that he is ignorant of his own ignorance: if any one should ask that man which is so perfect in the knowledge of his Religion, from whence it proceeds that they fail so much in their practice; they alleadge the corruption of their nature presupposing that it lodgeth onely in the affectiōs or in the wil, as if the intellect were altogether exempt: Neverthelesse if the eye of the soule, which is the understanding, if this eye were pure, all its actions would be full of light. It is true that the greatest part of those that commit evill know that it is unlawfull, but they believe to find their good therein which is a capital error. A man who kills himself believes that death is better to him then life; the highest mover to sinne will be alwayes found in, the falsenesse of the judgement, and in the unjust perswasions of the spirit, or because we do not understand God rightly, but onely cursorily

under some generall notions, without descending to the species & circumstances; or we understand without believing it. Or we believe it but with so weak a faith, that it is easily turned aside; It is true that we have knowledge enough, to make us inexcusable, but never too much to make us better.

*That works of Charity are the most visible marks of a Christian.* This maxime is repugnant to experience; we cannot discern a Christian from a Jew by alms or actions of beneficency, which the one may exercise as well as the other, the first mark which makes a Christian to be known is the confession of his faith, there is not a sect how desperate soever, but can furnish some examples of probity, temperance and of all vertues, whatsoever. Many hereticks, have cover'd the foulness of their errors by the splendour of their charitable life, if we must among so many congregations differing in doctrine dispute which is the most innocent in respect of manners, the Anabaptist would carry away the prize. We never

ver yet granted to the *Romane* Catholicks  
 that holinesse of life was a mark of the true  
 Church, and we do affirm that the impu-  
 rity of their manners had been no lawfull  
 cause of our separation. *That a Christian*  
*is not obliged to learn any thing, but in as*  
*much as it conduces to his salvation.* This  
 bold assertion carries not the mark of final  
 obedience. Many believe themselves to be  
 very pious, because they have a great de-  
 sire to be happy, and the reason why they  
 hearken to the Scripture is because it may  
 make them happy. Now it is most true  
 that God hath made his word the conduit  
 pipe of our salvation, but we ought not  
 onely for this respect to hearken to it, but  
 in as much as it is the word of God to  
 which we owe our attention although it  
 were against our owne profit. Those  
 whose practice is otherwise, are more a-  
 morous of their own salvation then of  
 their Saviour, and that their devotion  
 proves but mercenary; But this maxime  
 serves as a pretext to another error; None  
 dares absolutely say that the Scripture

contains any thing but that it serves to salvation. Neverthelesse besides an infinite number of histories, all the genealogies, chronologies, etimologies of proper names description of countries, and of buildings; ceremoniall ordinances, propheticall emblemes, the inwreathing of mysteries, and divers other pieces of Scripture are superfluous in the judgement of the Communnalty, because they see not to what use it serves towards their salvation; He that would rase out all that ignorant men hold to be unprofitable must reduce the Bible to the fourth part of what it containes, where as the Romish Church believes they ought to adde thereto.

*That a Christian ought to content himself with that which is simply necessary to salvation,* which is as much to say that a man ought to know no more of Religion but just as much as will serve him to be saved, as if it were a dangerous thing to understand too well his salvation, for to have too many Torches to conduct him to heaven under colour that a little spark or a  
 smoking

smoaking snuffe may give him sufficient light, I believe for certain that God hath had mercy upon many Idiots, who never knew of what tribe our Lord descended according to the flesh, nor of what family was the virgin *Mary*, nor whether *Abraham* preceded *Moses*. But this ignorance is not pardoned to all. A certain measure of knowledge will be sufficient to save one, which will not suffice for the salvation of another; More belongs to a Doctor in Theologie then to a lay man; to him that sits in the chaire of the Prophets, then him that sits at their footstool, to a man that hath lived forty years in the Church, then to an American or another proselyte who never heard speak of Jesus Christ, but at the houre of his death.

*That a Christian hath not need of much knowledge for to be saved.* It is a favourable prejudication to those who are negligent but most dangerous in matters of such consequence; If man knew how difficult it were to be saved he would never thinke the gate of heaven so large that the blinde

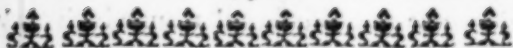
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might

might passe through without knowing of it, if there be any thing in which agility, dexterity, skill, knowledge are requisite it is in this point. It belongs to none but those which are wise to obtain the kingdome of heaven.

It is true the goodnesse of God saves an infinity of simple Idiots inlightned onely with some glimmering of his knowledge, but it is most sure that many of them receive it in a greater measure in the last moment of their lives; for this light may come at once, as a lightning which passes from the East to the West, and discovers in a wink both the length, and the largenesse; and the depth of many doctrines which he could never have so well comprehended, though he should have studied 30 years. One only night at the foot of *Jacobs* ladder will make him see more miseries then a multitude of clear and bright shining dayes in a well furnished library. The thief learnt more Theology hanging by *Jesus* in a quarter of an houre then many great Doctours have gotten all their life. I  
stop

stop not at those speculations which they alledge upon this question from whence it proceeds, that sometimes one hath seene ignorants being on their bed of death with deliberate judgement discourse of the highest points of faith with as much depth and in as good tearmes as the most accomplished Theologians ; Whether it be that the soul being as it were half loosed from the body, begins as then to soare aloft, and to discover that it never saw before, or that it being illuminated with a greater light, it perceives what it had never before learned ; I leave the decision thereof. But this grace is not common, nor doth it authorise a voluntary ignorance nor the practice of the common people, whose knowledge is at this day reduced to the onely rudiments of faith. Nor the carelesnesse, nor the insufficiency of many preachers who never give any thing but milk to their auditors under pretext that it is the word of God, for to keep them in perpetuall infancy and far from perfection.



## The second Section.

### CHAPTER I.

*Divinity reduced into a verball science abundance of tearmes, as well scholastick as Oratorian: A difference in this respect amongst the Sciences: an objection touching the stile of the Scripture.*

**I**N these times a man is held for learned, although he knows many words, although in effect he knows very little of the substance; the knowledge of many which are reputed for learned, consists rather in tearmes than in reality; A collection of words heaped up in the braine to the bignesse of a mountain, contains oft times but an atome, the production whereof is ridiculous: they are so multiplied, by a labour full of vanity, that there is more time spent in learning



ning the tearms then the thing it self, and in the end of our studies its found: we know a quantity of words, but scarce any substantiall matters, if one should gather all the tearms which are naturalised in Theologie and the divers senses of each one of them; he would make a dictionary whose volume would surpasse foure Bibles. If there be any thing in which our knowledge is straightened in narrow bounds it is the mystery of the Trinity, all which men can say in substance is reduced into very few words. Neverthelesse besides the tearms of Essentiall, Personall, Consubstantiall and others whose introduction hath been made necessary by the importunity of heresies we heare spoken of, Active and Passive Generation, likewise of Active and Passive Spiration, and Procession of emperichorise of absolute properties, and relative properties, of Agenesis, or ingenerability of works, externall, and of works internall, of divided and undivided operations of reall and modall distinctions, of a distinction Characteristicall

call of the supposed suppositive and Apotefmes, suppositions, The principles attributes substantiall & Oeconomicall attributes, the Endiathetick, & the word Prophoric, reflexively, a production by the way of the intellect, and by the way of the will, a production Physicall and Metaphysicall, & Hyperphysicall, Notionall acts; the abstract & the Concret. The Mission taken Actively, and the Mission taken Passively; the communication of Idiomēs, and an infinity of other words many of which are not altogether unprofitable, but the multitude of them shews our knowledge to be more verball then Reall. One of the highest points of our knowledge consists in distinctions; Now it is most certain, that there is more distinction of termes, then of things themselves, the onely word of faith is taken in so many differing significations that it requires a great deal of study. This knowledge is necessary to a Theologian, but considering it in it self, it gives at no other quality but the knowledge of distinguishing of syllables, like those who know  
all

all the differences, names of a plant, and yet are ignorant of the vertues thereof. In the mean while we see some who will display a conception as a rare and misterious doctrine which in the depth contains no other skill, but the clearing of an ambiguous word, the surplufage being nothing, but some triviall matter.

Now besides the multitude of termes already received, and as yet remain, in case they each day invent new ones, so that the language of *Canaan* hath the least part in Religion: and if Saint *Paul* should again return into the world scarce would he be capable to be received Doctor in Theology for want of having studied *Thomas Aquinas*, for the points of Religion have other names then those by which they were called in his time, and for one name that they then had there, they give them a hundred at this day, besides those which they have given to new matters, which all the Apostles never knew.

The Common people think that knowledge consists in the abundance of words, although

although that twenty different words signifie but the same thing, an ignorant fellow thinks he knows much because he knows many synonymies; This error ought to be attributed either to the ignorance or to the negligence of many Preachers and composers of books, fertill in words, barren in substance, whose instructions are more verball then doctrinall. The art to amplify a discourse, through a diversity of words and phrases equivolent in sence and gilded over sometimes with interrogations sometimes with Allegories, sometimes with Apostrophes, with Prosopopeia's; these circumlocutions would not be impertinent if they alwayes brought along with them some new reality, which should not onely augment the discourse, but also the Subject and matter thereof, otherwise to produce one onely conception stretched out in words as if it were new matter under colour that they represent it in divers vestes and different postures, it is a cunning more fit for a stage then a Pulpit.

These Retoricall amplifications are admitted

mitted into some certain sciences, in others they are altogether unprofitable. Physick hath nothing to do therewith, neither in respect of the Theory, nor of the practice. The Mathematicks suffer it not; it would be ridiculous to demonstrate the proportion of the diameter, to the circumference, or the Roots of the numbers, in Panegyricks, and Rethoricall declamations; The Theologian and the Lawyer onely employ them, the reason is that the end of these two professions is not onely to instruct and to inform the judgement of the auditors, but also to move their affections to what else serves the ornament, and the copiousnesse of a language; but Theology is not onely to move the affections (as ignorant men suppose); The first vertue of a Christian consists in the knowledge of God and of his works. Knowledge which cannot be but onely in the intellect which is instructed by proofs, and reall and direct demonstrations not by the windings and turnings of words, or exaggerating of things, which oftener clouds the truth,  
more

more then it enlighteneth, it enlightens it

But one may object that the Scripture it self is not every where logicall in all its parts, for it not onely teaches by axiome or universall rules, by concise distinction or simple Propositions, but also by promises and threatnings, by examples extended to the length by ordinary similitude by diversity of paraphrases and frequent repetitions: to which we answer the Scripture ought to be explained, and not to be made more intricate, that the amplifications, metaphors and comparisons in which the Scripture extends it self, nay the very repetitions, and that which is most verball in it, are full of realities of which we shall give some examples.

*The matters of the Scripture made verball  
by the ignorant, the solidity of its stile,  
mysteries turned into Reticall figures.*

**T**O say the same thing in divers  
tearmes, and in a multitude of  
words is a repetition which may  
serve to refresh the memory, or to move  
the affections, but brings no new thing to  
the intellect. The ignorant deceive them-  
selves, if they believe that the repetitions  
which are in the Scripture are of no other  
quality but Grammaticall or Reticall;  
when the Scripture repeats any point, this  
repetition declares something else more  
then it had said the first time. In one and  
the same passage the repetition of the  
same word is not alwayes a *Pleonasme*,  
for to give an *Emphasis* to the discourse, or  
to inculcate that which had already been  
spoken, to the end that it should be the bet-  
ter remembred. The repetitions of the  
Scripture alwayes bring some addition,  
and termes which seem Synonimies have  
sometimes

Sometimes different significations. The twelve Patriarks are called to the Testament of their father in these termes, *Come together ye children of Jacob, hearken to Israel your father.* These words contain in appearance a superfluous tautologie. For it seemes it was enough to have called them children of *Jacob* without adding that *Israel* was their father, seeing that *Jacob* and *Israel* was one and the same person. But as one of these two names was a majestick title that God had conferred upon his person, and the other was rather a mark of reproach. The Patriarks are called children of *Jacob* to the end they should remember their low extraction, and to take notice that their father spak to them in quality of *Israel*, A Prince with God, whose words were nothing but oracles. These two names having been transmitted to the intestine body of his posterity are very often joyned together for to denoate on, and the same people. *They shall teach* (said *Moses*) *thy judgements to Jacob and thy law to Israel,* that is they shall teach the people



ple weak in faith, comprehended under the name of *Jacob* and the most eminent represented under the title of *Israel*, in the same sort as Christ recommended unto *Peter*, the feeding not onely of his lambs, but also of his sheep. The vulgar people know no difference between *Lawes, Ordinances, and Judgements, betwixt Commandements and Statutes*, tearmes which are oft times joyned in one and the same passage, but are very different in their signification which the ignorant ordinarily confound; the two dreames of *Pharaoh* were but one and the same, and it seems as if the second were superfluous, seeing that it said nothing in substance which had not been spoken in the first. But besides the diversity of figures produced in these two dreames which teacheth diversity of circumstances under this differency of shapes, he who was the interpreter marks this repetition, as devoting something more, then as if the dream had come but once. It imports much to know how often one thing hath been repeated in the same place of the Scripture

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without

without disputing if these words of *Hieremy*, *Say not the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord* advertised the Jewes not to hope for a third temple. It is certain that the number of reiterations is oftentimes misterious. If *S. Peter* had remembred that he had denied his Master, thrice he would have wondred why our Lord said unto him thrice *lovest thou me*. In *Ezekiel 28*. God said to the King of *Tire*. *All the precious stones covered thee, The Carbuncle, the Topaz, the Diamond the Berill, the Sardonix, the Jasper, the Sapphir, the Chrysolite, and the Emerald thou walkest amongst the precious stones*: Many do not see in this discourse any thing but a rithoricall description, enlarged by the amp'ification of magnificent words, w<sup>h</sup>e one word seemingly means nothing else but that this Princee was rich, and opulent. But whosoever will remember that all these precious stones had place in the breastplate of the High Priest, that each one of them carried the name of a Tribe, that one of the Predecessors of this King of *Tire* had  
had

had part in the glory of these Tribes, by the honour that God did him to accept his materialls, and his workmen for the fabrick of the Temple. Whosoever say, I will fixedly regard these precious stones, will find that they contain farre greater lights then the Lustre of a verball amplification, and some reason may be given, why that two or three, of these tribes are omitted in this description of *Ezechiel*. If this sence be obscure in this passage certainly it is evident in the foundations of the celestiall *Jerusalem*, painted out in the 21 of the *Apocalips*, which being represented in divers sorts of precious stones, differing in their species distinguished by their names, placed each one in his proper rank and reduced to a certain number which neither suffers Addition, nor subtraction cannot be taken onely for a heaping together of words of amplification, the allusion of them to the twelve stones in the pectorall is altogether manifest, and the ranging of them altogether different from the order which *Moses* gave them

produces a mysticall reflection of many high mysteries, both in the one, and the other Testament; we might make an infinite of passages to this purpose. But although in many of them we find not alwayes the true substance of the fruit the Scripture hides under this abundance of flowers, it is there notwithstanding and testifies the sottish vanity of so many commentators which think they have dived to the bottome of the Ark; when after a curious search they find there an Emphasis of the *Grammar* or an *Epistrophe*, as if a figure of Rethorick were a mystery of Theologic.

( 63 )  
CHAP. 3.

*The essence of Christianity annihilated by the maximes of the vulgar, who reduce Religion into morality, which is the most excellent and most necessary doctrine of Religion. A difference between the method of Philosophers and the order that Theologie sets forth in the instruction of manners.*

THE common people holds that all Religion consists in practice or in works ; that all Christianity lies in the doctrine of good works, or at least that this doctrine of good manners is the principal part and the foundation of Religion. These maximes are very pleasing, whereupon they represent faith, the tongues knowledge, prophesie, as unprofitable qualities without Charity. The greatest idiots are greatest Orators in this point and set forth excellently the praise of good works which indeed cannot be too much commended : But yet it is a greater error then

think of, to imagine Religion to be only a doctrine of manners, whereupon we must mark these following positions.

1 The doctrine of Religion hath two parts, the first shews what God hath done for man, the other teacheth what man ought to do for God, the first comprehends, after the consideration of the essence of God and of his perfections the intire Oeconomy of his works in nature; in grace, and in glory. The second delineates all Christian vertues, as well intellectuall as Morall.

2 This first part is the true and principall Character which distinguisheth christians from all others: For there is no false Religion whatsoever, but teacheth many excellent morallities; but to teach what God hath done for us especially in the work of our redemption is a doctrine which is not to be found, but in the Christian Religion.

3 The true essence of Christianity, lieth in this part, for all other Religions teach salvation by the work of man towards

wards God but ours teacheth this salvation as a work of God towards man.

4 Ignorant men think that Religion is nothing but a Law, and so confound the difference between the Law and the Gospel and so annihilate Christianity it self.

5 The greatest corruption which ever came into the Church began by those maximes, which commended morall doctrine, as being the whole substance of religion, for so it came to passe, that finally Christianity was reduced into morality; if one will mark the consequences of many opinions newly introduced, he will find they all shoot at this mark.

6 Its an impiety to affirm that the doctrine of works is the foundation of Religion, or at least it is spoken very inconsiderately. For salvation which is the true subject of Religion, is grounded upon that good which God doth to us, not upon the good which we do, from whence this result doth proceed, that the fundamentall doctrine of Christianity is not that which teacheth us good manners, but to the con-

trary, that part which we call morrall hath his foundation upon the first.

7 Then it is but a rash assertion to maintain that that doctrine which speaks of manners, is the most excellent part of Religion. For if the noblenesse of a science depends upon the excellency of a subject without dispute that part which concerns God and his works, is more sublime and elevated then that which handles the works of man ; nay more this second part cannot have any place, but as a consequence of the other ; all Christian vertues are effects of sanctification which is a work of God.

8 But they do alledge that Morall doctrine is most necessary, and that they ought more to insist upon that, then upon the first. To which we answer, that the first part is that which gives the essence to the other, and is the source and *primum mobile* to all vertue. 'Tis it which furnisheth us with lights, without which all our morality would be dark and heathenish. And though this should not be, it would be



be a great error to believe that it were enough for a good Christian to be a good moralist; to the instruction of Christians Religion hold a contrary method to that which is used in Philosophy; for it is all one to Philosophers, whether they teach the practicall sciences before the contemplative, forasmuch as that morality or politicks do not borrow their principalls from Mathematicks, or Phisick. But in Religion, Theologick vertues which rule all others, cannot be extended without a foreknowledge of their object. Now this object which is God himself is not known but by his works, so that a Christian ought to know what God hath done for him, before he can understād what he ought to do for God. The Law it self in the frontispice of the Decalogue before that it speaks of our duty towards God teacheth us what he is, and what he hath done for us. Finally it is to be consider'd that the most necessary part of religion is that which handles the causes of our salvatiō, as is the person & office of Christ our justification, & now

Now these points are not morrall doctrines.

#### CHAP. IV.

*Why common people loves not rather to be instructed in manners, then in any other point of religion. Everyone hath a naturall opinion to be saved by his workes.*

**T**HIS part of Religion which we call morall, is more pleasing to the common people, and a better care given thereto then the other. The reason is, because the generall rules of good manners, and the principalls of vertue, are naturally known to the most blockish. From thence it comes to passe, that this kind of doctrine pleaseth them, as being in part naturall, and because of its facility; For an Idiot hath no great paine to comprehend that he ought to render to each one what belongs unto him; and that one ought to have compassion of the afflicted, and other precepts which nature makes intelligible.

But

But the other matters because they are for the most part supernaturall and misterious, find not so favourable an attention in the Auditors; Behold yet more which we have to marke; which is a naturall pre-judicate opinion in man, when one speaks of the obtaining of salvation, they thinke incontinently on works, as the true cause which ought produce that effect; The Jews taking it for granted, askes not our Lord, but upon the quality of workes, *John 6.28.* All the men of the world except Christians build upon their workes, they not being able to imagine any other meritt for to be saved.

Now this principall is naturall, as having been ingrafted in the heart of man ever since his creation, to wit, that he should have eternall life by his workes; Which was true in the estate of innocencie, for Workes would have produced this effect if man had not lost his forces. Now hee leaves as yet on this principall, the impression whereof he hath retained, although that his fall having broken all his bones, shewes

shewes him that his pretensions are but vaine. From this fountaine proceeds not only the opinions which attribute the efficacy of salvation to workes, but also the maximes of the common people, who acknowledging the impuissance of workes in this regard; neverthelesse so highly elevates the dignity of them, that hee thinkes that the preaching modesty in cloathes is a more excellent doctrine, then to teach them all the misteries of the Gospell.

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# CHAP. V.

*The Scripture made absurd by vulgar, and by those Preachers who turne it into morality. Popular Vertues.*

**W**Hat the common people seekes principally in the Scripture is some morrall instruction, certainly necessary beyond what is spoken. But many beleeving that the Scripture ought not to containe any other thing, reduce it all into morality, namely the Histories in which they

they consider no other subject, but the examples either of vice, or of vertue. This ignorance which turns the most elevated misteries into simple morall precepts introduceth a thousand absurdities in the Scripture, in which we meet with divers narrations, which if taken only morrally, would be found very impertinent. The bargaine made between *Lea* and *Rachel*, *Gen. 30. 14.* the contention betweene *Sara* and *Hagar*, the childish strife betwixt *Isaac* and *Ismael*, if we bring no other conceptions then those of the vulgar, these matters would be both frivolous and ridiculous; certainly, these histories carry a deeper sence. And *S. Paul, Gal. 4. 24.*) finding in these two last the Image of the most important truths which are in religion which shewes that the intention of the holy Ghost was cleare otherwise then only to paint forth simple moralities.

More faulty is as yet the stile of an infinite number of Preachers, who believe they handle the Scripture very well, so that they disguise all in Tropes. If they  
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handle the miraculous healing of the leprous, all their discourse will be of the spirituall Leprosie; If of the resurrection of one dead, they will speake only of regeneration; turning these histories out of their naturall sence, and omitting in the meane time the considerations which they furnish us to the true understanding of the place; Truly, its permitted to draw an instruction for manners from an article of the faith; but it is a great folly to lay hold of the concomitant of a subject, in stead of the principall, and make the body of their discourse thereof. When any will expressly handle a morall doctrine the Scripture abounds in formall passages for such matters, otherwise hee should both mock them, and his auditors to preach the decalogue in interpreting the Symbole. But it is easier for the ignorant to preach morality, then to handle a point more misterious, only for to bring it forth after their ordinary fashion in grosse equipage, and under triviall reasons; For to handle worthily a doctrine of manners one ought

to have provision of rare matters and conceptions, elevated above the common, which belongs not but to a profound Theologian. The vulgar knowes the vertues by their habits, then in their essence. Popular piety abounds so in certaine acts that it neglects the others, namely, all charity at this day is reduced into almes; Many love rather to nourish a poore man, then to convert an Idolater, although it be a greater worke of charity to save one soule, then to feed a hundred thousand bellies. Otherwise a man who had founded Hospitalls, should have done a farre more excellent worke then all the labours of the Apostles.

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# CHAP. VI.

## CHAP. VI.

*Touching curiosities, Rash questions of those which are returned from the dead: Of the Divell who exhorted to repentance: Of the knowledge of evill.*

**M**AN never saw the creation of any thing: when God would forme Eve, he made Adam sleep; So likewise he hath reserved to himselfe the judgement of three points; 1. of his counsell; 2. of Scripture, 3. of consciences. To inquire of the Son, proceeds of the Father, as of the Intellect, and the holy Ghost as of the will. What had been the posterity of Adam, if he had not falne, and if in this case the Sonne of God would have cloathed himselfe with our flesh; or if the sacred body of Jesus Christ was perfectly organified from the first moment of his conception, if God could not have saved man by any other meanes, then by the death of his Sonne. And whether Jesus Christ by his sufferances hath merited his proper exaltation besides



sides our salvation; are most rash curiosities.

If any one should rise againe from the dead, our curiosity would aske him a thousand questions, but I marke that of all those who ever rise againe, not one (except our Lord) is introduced, speaking in the Scripture, except we put into this ranke, *Moses* and *Elias* in the transfiguration, which neverthelesse spake not but of the death of Jesus Christ. Though a man should come from heaven, hee could not name the things which he had seene or understood, because that it never having mou-  
 ted into the thought of man, they could not impose names thereto. So that those things could not be declared but in tearms, the sence whereof would be unknown unto us, they are words uneffable, which man cannot pronounce, and ought not to affect. If the dead ought to be our instructors, the spirit of error would easily counterfeite them, and under this pretext would authorise his impostures. The Scripture of all the damned names, but only *Judas*, and  
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would not expresse the name, the evill rich. But many spirits which they pretend to be returned from the other world particularise by names and surnames the soules they have seen in hell. For the vulgar presuppose that they know one another, and that the Devill knows all that are within his bottomles pit. Upon this imagination the Exorcists believing they have the power to make him tell nothing but truth, and inquire of curious things, taking pleasure to make him talk ; whereas Jesus Christ never made him speak but once, imposing silence upon them in all other deliverances of those, out of whom he had cast the Devils. Namely, it is not long since the Devil preached repentance by the mouth of some, which were possessed, his words have been gathered and published in a grosse volume by men bearing the title of approved theologians which have alledged them for a very perswasive argument of amendment of life, showing that the Devil who took upon him this office was sent by God to convert men, seeing that

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the other wayes were unprofitable, farre from repulſing the impudency of this adverſary, who ſpeaks not of piety but by mockery, or for to render it ſuſpected be-  
 cauſe of which when he would have ſpoken in favour of the truth, our Lord made him alwayes hold his peace.

All unlawfull curioſities have relation unto two heads, whoſe inquiſition is forbidden us, to wit the hight of heaven and the depth of hell.

The Scripture praiſeth thoſe who have not known the depths of Satan. A too exact knowledge of evill offends the ſpirit, and a man well ſkilled in malice although that it but in Theory will ever now and then give a taſt thereof; The diligence of Caſuiſts to examine all the ſpecies of ſins namely thoſe whoſe onely name ſtrikes a horror to our eares hath been a pernicious labour, more capable to deſtroy good manners, then to inſtruct the conſciences.

*Wherefore Scholaſtick Theologie was invented  
and how it was eſtabliſhed: with a con-  
trary ſucceſſe.*

**T**Hree things have made Scholaſticall Theology to be cried down, ſetting aſide the impurity, *des dogmes* of their opinions, with which it is ſtuffed.

1 The multitude of Philoſophicall matters. 2 The vain curioſitie of questions. 3 the barbarouſneſſe of the language; the intention of thoſe who built it was to keep the key of knowledge among themſelves, and to hinder the common people from entering therein, and to take from them the knowledge of Theologie, to this effect they ſtopt the gap with thorns, and made the paſſage difficult. Firſt mingling Philoſophy therewith, nay all the moſt ſubtil ſpeculations of Metaphyſicks, then reducing the whole Chriſtian doctrine into high and tickliſh questions, which the vulgar neither durſt nor could approach, and finally

nally inventing a certain canting of strange and unexplicable words as the Physicians having their tearmes and Characters not to be understood, but onely by those of the same profession.

Now this Theologie begins to be introduced amongst us, the principall matters which they handle at this time, are the divine decrees, with all their consequences. There be those which find the depth of the highest secrets of God; nothing is unknown unto them neither in heaven nor hell, and their mouths bring forth words uneffable which themselves understand not: For these new stufes still have new names, and it is to be feared in the end least all the doctrine of Religion should again turn Scholastick. But this Metamorphosis hath not the same successe which it had in times past for the ancient Scholastick theology being invented for to keep the people in a stupid silence held it self in the compasse of the cloysters, and of the universities; but the Modern have leapt into the Pulpit of the Churches, from thence to the market

places, to the shops to the tables, and into the brains of the cōmon people, to fill them with scruples, cries, and contentious disputes, and to make them fight for a subject which for the most part they understand not.

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## CHAP. 8.

*The boldnesse of the vulgar, the last Christians ought to know more then the first. The modern Church ought to be called ancient.*

**T**HAT which we have spoken justifies not the temerity of ignorant men, who presently condemne all matters or questions which surpasse their capacity. The vulgar are wonderfully bold to reject as curious each doctrine which they understand not or they judge it unprofitable, under colour that they do not comprehend the importance thereof, or they accuse it of novelty, because they never heard of it: before we give examples thereof we shall produce some observations

ons. Our age is reputed worse then the precedent. If this complaint be as true as it is common, let those judge who will compare the ancient and the modern occurrences. Certainly in one point our age surpasseth others, and in the same respect posterity will surpass our selves, especially in the knowledge of many things unknown to the ages past, a knowledge which facilitates the Scriptures in divers matters which our forefathers fifteen ages past could never find the intelligence of setting aside the discovery of the new world, and a thousand other wonders which have happened since them, many Prophecies have been dark unto them, which at this day are as cleare as the sun : for their accomplishment hath dissipated the obscurity and knowledge hath multiplied from time to time according to the measure that the lamb hath opened the scales of his oracles.

The name of antiquity hath abused many, the Church which was then and which is at this day are but one universall Church in respect of time, the difference of ages

makes us to distinguish into two, calling it the ancient and the new, but by transposition of names, for we call it ancient, considering it in the first ages, in which it was yong & new, & to the contrary, we qualifie it new, in this time in which it ought to be called ancient, as having obtain'd to a greater age; notwithstanding taking Antiquity in the ordinary sence, it may teach vs very much, principally for historie, and matters which consist in action. But as by this meanes we may know that which our forefathers have known, we have moreover this advantage, that we know many things which were unknown to them.

CHAP. 9.

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## CHAP. IX.

*Concerning that Maxime; That we cannot say anything but what hath been already spoken.*

**T**His popular opinion serves for a pretext of ignorance, and of carelesse to many men. They would be much troubled if one should aske them if this maxime had been alwayes true ever since the beginning of the world, for then it would follow, that whatsoever came since the first man should have beene spoken before, and so of necessitie that *Adam* had spoken of *David*, of *Moses*, and *Solomon*, of *Pilate*, and of the Romans of *Constantine* the great, and of *Charlemaine*. If this axiome hath not been alwaies true in what time began it then to be; when all things hath been made an end to be spoken who made up the closure; but certainly the assertion hath not been alwaies true, not in Philosophie to whom nature and experience have discovered from time to time

time many things unknowne to antiquity. Not in Physick, which hath seen new diseases produced, and hath found out new remedies; Not in the Politicall science to whom occurrences have suggested lawes unthought of by the Ancients. Not in Mathematicks, which have produced new inventions unknown to our Fathers. Not in History which each day is enlarged, and will never faile to find new subjects. Not in Mechannick arts, many of which have been invented in this last time, and the others still produce some new artifice Ecclesiasts, which they alleage to the contrary, speakes only of the ordinary course of nature, and of actions, common to all ages, and to all men. For the production and corruption of sublunarie bodies, life and death, laughter and teares, prosperity and adversity, are nothing new under the Sun. But they may object, that Theology is a compleat Science, having all its principalls, and all its materialls in the Scripture, to which nothing may be added. It is most true, but all that which is in the Scripture hath

hath not as yet been understood ; so then, all that which may bee spoken upon the Scripture hath not as yet been spoken. There is an infinite number of points in History, in the Prophets, in the Morall lawes, in the Ceremonies of the ancient Testament, and in the misteries of Faith, whose sence as yet hath never been intirely dived into. Setting all curiosities apart, 'tis a blockish rashnesse to believe that Theologie cannot furnish a subject to many excellent considerations as yet never conceived nor understood, nor will I speak of the divers Prophecies, whose accomplishment we still expect ; and it is not possible to speake thereof with so much sufficiencie, as those that shall see the issue, so that all is not spoken which may belong to this matter ; Finally, there is many assertions which cannot bee pronounced in true tearmes, but in their proper time, as that which our Lord said ( *All is fulfill'd* ) could not be spoken before. One day it will be said the resurrection is past, which hath not as yet beene spoken but by some hereticks,

hereticks, but we must passe to another head.

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# CHAP. X.

*Of Paradoxes, or matters which are strange to the vulgar.*

**W**Hatsoever is contrary to the common opinion or naturall sense of men is ordinarily rejected as monstrous. Many cannot believe that *Moses* requiring to be blotted out of the booke of life, or *St. Paul* wishing to be made Anathema, spoke in good earnest, for all the condition they proposed to this demand, or for what favour soever they could pretend to receive in respect of their salvation; Much lesse will they receive that paradoxe grounded upon these examples; which is, *That each man ought to preserve the glory of God before his owne proper salvation.* Our weaknesse cannot conceive any thing more feelingly then the particular interest of our soule, nor have any passion so strong  
as

as for this subject. Neverthelesse the theory is not lesse true, although the practice be impossible, either in the effect, or in our will; We have seen some scandalized for having heard that it is not permitted to curse the divell; Which was spoken to shew by a strong reason, that man might not curse man, were he the most desperate villaine of all the earth; And all the maledictions which a man can pronounce against the divill, as many doe in vertue of their pretended charge of exorcists which can be nothing else but a frivolous action; nay more, which is an high attempt against the jurisdiction of God, which *Michael* the Archangell striving for the body of *Moses*, durst never undertake; But popular spirits are offended with whatsoever is repugnant to their prejudicate opinions. And neverthelesse the Christian religion, if the depths thereof were sounded full of paradoxes as admirable to those who understand them as strange to the ignorance of the vulgar.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XI.

*Of Problemes, and of their difference, and of morall Problemes in particular.*

**T**Here are many points in Theologie, and also in other Sciences of which we find no decision. These points, because they are not of the essence of Faith, and remaine problematicall, are ordinarily rejected by the vulgar, as vaine and unprofitable. But certainly the Scripture which produceth nothing superfluous suggests thereby many things unto us; 'tis well knowne that all the difficulties which are found therein, have not as yet beene surmounted, divers matters remain undecided, and God will have us to exercise our spirits therein; the leaves namely of the tree of Life have their medicine in them. These questions which the Scripture covertly moves, telleth us our ignorance, and ought to be examined for to teach us that our judgement is incapable for to give the solution.

But

But indeed there are divers Problemes which may be put into the ranke of curiosities; As the inquiry what is the language of the Angels, and how they speak, seeing they have neither tongue nor lungs; Or if in Heaven we shall speake the language of the Hebrewes; Or whether the fire of Hell be materiall; or if a man dying a few years since, as *Lazarus* should rise from the dead, whether or no hee should have reason to require what belonged to him at that time he died, or whether he had left the right, as well as the possession. It may be some thought of the last question, because of ancient Hereticks, who blame the second marriages in taking a pretext, that the first marriage did as yet subsist betwixt the dead man and the living wife, fearing peradventure the dead should arise and dispute the place with his new successor, although that the Scripture, namely in expresse termes hath condemned this folly *Romans 7*. But the questions which are moved for to know; What was the siane of the evill angels, for which they were

were banished from heaven: how long the first man remained in the state of Innocence; If in the eternall life we shall know those we have seen in this world; If there be a difference of glory amongst the blessed. and in what place the soule is lodged in the body, either in the heart, or in the braine, it may be are not so vain; laying aside those which are of this nature. Its a curiosity worthy of a Christian to aske what things were the *Vrim* and *Thummim* in the brest-plate of the high Priest, if *Jephtha* sacrificed his Daughter, if Saint *Paul* be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews? How many yeares our Lord remained upon the earth from his Nativity to his Ascension? Whether faith hath its seat in the intellect, or resides in the will?

But above all the necessity and profit of morall Problemes is evident. I speak not of those which the Casuists have founded upon actions, either impossible or frivolous, but of questions which concerne our inordinary and important occasions; It is not



not sufficient to say, that we have our generall principles cleare, and out of dispute, which rules the conscience in all sorts of actions; For it is true, that these universall maxims are like to fixed starres, and have their regular motion; but when we come to hypotheses and particular occurrences, then they descend as in the region of elements wherein all things are various and turbulent, and where one findes a perpetuall conflict of reasons, like to waves drawn by contrary winds; Nor is it sufficient for a man to alleadge the suspension of his action, when as he doubts the justice thereof, for feare of corrupting goodnesse by a scrupulous conscience; For there is sometimes occasions in which surceasing, is more criminall then an actuall fault, and whilst they delay for information sake, for what they ought to doe, they fall into irreparable omission; Christian wisdom ought to prevent these perplexities: a man who hath given an oath to his Country to put fire to the powder, and make himselfe leap into the aire, rather then to render

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himselfe

himself to the enemy ; hath need to instruct his conscience, before he imbarque himself in such a designe : but I leave this question, and an infinity of the like nature.

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CHAP. 12.

*Of certain cases of Conscience which are not as yet resolved.*

NOR is it sufficient to reply, that there is certain problemes in divers cases, which look unto the practick, which are not as yet resolved by the most learned, they put the case that a man falling into the hands of thieves is constrained for redemption of his life, to sweare a perpetuall silence, and to assure them as much as lies in him, of impunity. Whether this promise may be accomplished without offence or infringed without crime, it is a point which hath not yet been resolved the reasons are so prevalent on either side. Also they dispute, whether a Christian being imprisoned for the faith of the Gospell may

may in conscience seek meansto escape & come out of the dungeon by breaking of the dores, or by using some other subtilty. Many maintain the negative, and qualifie this evasion, shamefull to the Christian profession, and repugnant to the order of justice. Others esteem it lawfull, and hold that the meanes conducing to our deliverance cannot be despised without tempting God. It hath happened that two being of a contrary Religion, and the Orthodoxall party constrained to abandon his dwelling place, his idolatrous wife refuseth to follow her Christian husband, who asking permission to marry another, the Theologians were divided and of different opinions in this respect. If there be any thing which ought heretofore to be resolved, it is this case of conscience.

The lending of money upon interest a question which concerns one of the ordinary points of particular commerce amongst men; and notwithstanding it is as yet undecided. For some put no difference betwixt a light interest, and that

which the Jewes call biting, it being interdicted by the Law, and others admit it as lawfull in the proportions of equity, as the same Law recommends but the difficulty of a solution takes not away the necessity and the impossibility of it in some points takes not away from us the searching after others.

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### CHAP 13.

*Of certain questions which are indifferent in which the one ought the rather to be delivered then the other.*

**T**Here be disputable matters, which are not so indifferent or so well ballaced but that the weight of the one will turne the scales. Its a disputable point, whether the terrestriall Paradise be as yet subsistent. The negative hath more appearance. Its a question not necessary, whether the Arch of the alliance was burnt when the *Babylonians* fired the temple. the affirmative is the most certain, namely we do imploy it to convince of falseness the history

story of the *Macchabees*, which relates that this Arch was found at the return from the Captivity. Behold here one more important, to wit, whether the spirits, and namely the soule of man, are purely immateriall essences. Certain ancient Theologians followed also by some moderne Divines, deny it, and give it a substance as that of the aire subtil and imperceptible, but notwithstanding in some sort materiall: to which it is very hard to subscribe. This is the most considerable of all, whether the humane soule be immediately produced from God, and by him infused into the body, or whether it draws its essence from his Progenitors, who transmit it to their children by naturall propagation, the first of these two opinions is without doubt the more receiveable and the most worthy of a Christian. I set aside the disputes touching the salvation of *Adam* and *Solomon*, in which the most favourable opinion, is also most certain.

## CHAP. 14.

*Indifferent questions sometimes become necessary. Many things are held for problematicall which are not so in effect. Problematicall points ought not to be believed with the same faith, as the articles necessary to salvation.*

**I**F there be any matters which are of small importance they are these following. What age had *Terah* when *Abraham* was born unto him, *Genesis* 11.12. how many yeares the *Hebrews* were in *Egypt*, *Exod.* 12. *Gal.* 3. 17. How many persons descended thither with *Jacob*. *Gen.* 46.27. *Acts* 7. 14. These points and many other, which we might quote have some difficulty. An ignorant will not trouble himself therewith, but an *Atheist* will find wherewithall to calumniate the whole *Bible* and the *Jews* from thence have drawn objections against us, crying out the new *Testament* to be false, which they pretended to be contrary to the history of *Moses*

A Christian is obliged to seek instruction as well in these things as also in an infinite of others, to the end that Religion be not blasphemed through our ignorance.

On which occasion you may mark a number of matters, which are Problematicall, rather in opinion, then in effect; I believe that many questions which we hold for disputable, the solution thereof is contained in the Scripture, although we find it not therein. Our ignorance is the cause that they remain Problematicall which would not be if the Scripture were perfectly understood; certainly there is some which are not therein decided; we ought not to be so bold as the Scholasticks who have disputed if the ravishing of *S. Paul* into the third heaven was in body or in spirit onely. They might be assured not to find the solution thereof. But on the other side it's a great temerity to hold all for undecided in the Scripture, because we cannot resolve it.

In the meantime there is no reason for us to imbrace with an equall stableness

of belief, the points which are as yet Problematicall unto us, as those of which we have a full assurance.

It is most worthy to be believed that the Virgin never had any other children then he for whom all ages call her blessed. But this point is not of the same quality as those whose demonstration is cleare undubitable and necessary.

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#### CHAP. 15.

*Of those who will know nothing but what is found in the Scripture.*

**W**ithout derogating from the Scripture the perfect rule of faith as well as of manners, we say there is divers matters not contained therein, whose ignorance would be shamefull and unfitting to a Christian capable of instruction. I speak not here of many natural principles which the Scripture expresseth not, as not to know that two contradictions cannot be true, or that the whole is greater, then a part under colour that the Scriptures speaks



speaks not of it, should be a criminall brutality. The Scripture teaches not naturall Notions, but presupposeth them as manifest, because it speaketh to men, not to stones. I leave divers histories and prophecies, as are the works of *Daniel*, the drying up of the river *Euphrates* in the *Apocalips* and a number of others which is impossible to understand without the knowledge of many things which the Scripture teacheth not. The Passage of the Israelites through the red sea. The darknesse happening at the death of our Lord are acknowledged to be miraculous, because they came in a time that they could not be produced by naturall causes, which was the reason that the Scripture passeth it under silence. All the predictions which have come to passe since the closing of the new Testament show not their accomplishment but in humane histories: Nay all these prophecies are finally reduced into histories, which are not found in the Scripture.

But I will onely touch one point or two which consist not but onely in act. He  
who

who would believe the temple of *Jerusalem* is as yet standing ? that the Jews sacrifice therein ? and that the other legall ceremonies are practised as if their Republick as yet subsisted would be culpable of a very grosse error, and notwithstanding the history of the cessation of sacrifices is not to be read in the Scripture, it teacheth us that the Leviticall sacrifices were abolished by right but as then in act. Nevertheless this actuall abolition came since so advantageously for the Christians, that one cannot be ignorant thereof without manifest carelesnesse. Also we do not learn in the Scripture, that there be as yet Jews in the world : and nevertheless it would be a blockish stupidity to be ignorant of the subsistence of that nation, whose misery verifies the threatnings of our saviour upon them, and whose conversion we do as yet expect. But above all it would be an ignorance worthy of reproach to put in indifferency how many ages we ought to count since the birth of Christ. A man who should not know whether there were  
more

more then two hundred yeares since Jesus Christ was borne, should be unworthy the name of a Christian, although that the supputation be a matter of Chronologie, which is not deduced in the Scripture, but increaseth day by day.

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### CHAP. XVI.

*Of those which studie nothing but controversies, what sort of controversies may teach us most doctrine: what points of doctrine are the most difficult amongst Christians. what expedient may weake ones take in the highest questions. A rule which is not to be found, but in the reformed Religion. Of Miracles. Of Martyres. Concerning the question where was the Church before the Reformation.*

**S**OME seek no other instruction but that of controversies; a studie truly which is necessary for to furnish Antidotes in places, or in times infected with heresies: But yet it is incapable to give  
unto

unto the soule a full reflection. He should truly be a foole, who would take no other nourishment, but from the Treacle or the Rubarbe. Controversies shewes not the whole body of Religion, but the parts thereof which are in dispute. And this is but by accident: For our faith is affirmative, not negative. And our knowledge hath for its object the evidence of truths, not the disguising of errors. Who would come by this way to a more universall knowledge of religion, he must study not only all whatsoever wee dispute with the Roman Catholicks, but also whatsoever the Christian Church debates against an infinite of Sects, who rob her of her title; nay more, all the differencies which wee have to decide with the Jewes. Mahometans, Indians, and other Pagans, and that which is worse with a multitude of Atheists.

If there be a controversie in which a Christian armed to the prooffe against blasphemies, may learne rare and excellent things, 'tis in that which we have with the Jewes,

Jewes, I understand for to have an exact knowledge, and not to consider only the trunk, but also all the branches; the juyce and the marrow from the lowest of the rootes, to the highest of the leaves. To see the depth of this controversie, is more painfull then all the others. It hath but very few Philosophicall arguments; All therein is drawne from the deep fountaines of the ancient testament, and you must lift all the curtaines of the Tabernacle, and passe through many vailes, before that one can see the holiest of holies. This was the exercise of the first Christians. For their first disputes began by the Jewes, and excepting necessity which obligeth us to turn head to other adversaries, this controversie would be more fruitfull then any other.

There are two sorts of matter in which lies the hardest controversies which be amongst Christians, and the most difficult to manage; 1. Those which touch the decrees of God, as the Prevision or Prescience, Prudence, *Predestination*, *Reprobation*, &c. Secondly, Those which concernes  
the

the qualitties of the soule, be it in Nature, or be it in Grace, Free-will, certainty of Faith, &c. The reason why these two points are more difficult then the others, is evident in respect of the first.

Divine decrees are infinitely distant from our sight, as being elevated above all times and inclosed in a volume of which we see nothing but a few characters hard to be discerned at so great a distance. Many who thinke they read there distinctly, draw most dangerous constructions. But it is a wonder in the other point, that so many difficulties are found, seeing that the subject is so neare our eyes, nay, that it is within our selves. Our intellectu is in trouble to know whether our intellectu and the will are faculties really different. Whether granting the judgement of the Intellect, the will must necessary follow : or if it remains in Balance, and in power to suspend its action. If our faith be placed in the Intellect, or in our will : Our soule so little knowes thereof, that she knowes not where to find her selfe, being ignorant whether she

she resides in the blood, or in any other particular part of the body, or whether she be universally diffused through all the parts thereof. The proximitie it selfe of the subject, is the cause of this difficulty. The soule no more then the eye cannot see it selfe, except it be by a very obscure reflection, and that false to, for the most part, which we call indirect knowledge; For to disturbe the spirits of the common people, ye need but to set them on these two points, which many have chosen expressly, as being full of Labirinth.

He who hath not been acquainted with these flights, ought to remember that in each controversie truth lodgeth in a center, to which ought to bend all matters which are in dispute. In these differences which concerne the will of God towards man, or the will of man towards God ( for all the controversies of Election, of universall grace, of free will, of perseverance, and such like, may have relation to these two things) these maximes ought to be the center, to wit, that the glory of all good belongs to

God

God. That whatsoever is ill proceeds from man. We must not attribute to God the ill that proceeds from man. Nor to man the good which proceeds from God. One cannot take from God the smallest part of his glory without ravishing it intirely, because that it is indivisible as a point that admits no parting. Commutative justice cannot happen to be in God. The creature attributing unto God all the good which is in her, cannot faile in excesse, nor incurre any danger thereby, but in attributing some portion thereof to himselfe, he may runne some hazard. In these principles which are as undoubtable as familiar, as they may easily resolve all the subtilties, will they, or nill they, which may be produced on the one side, or the other; And the weakest Christian taking heed to the lines which end not in this center, or fall aside, will easily judge that they are irregular.

This constant and universall rule may be applyed to all ~~for~~ doctrine, *John 7.18* and I dare say, that of all religions which are in the world, there is none but the reformed



formed which attributes to God the glory of all good, especially in the salvation of man. And certainly, there is not one of the others, but makes profession to attribute to God this glory; but examining them nearly, you shall not find any but that take away some part, to make thereof a pre sent to man what they avow in generall, they steale by retaile, or deny it by their consequences to hinder God from possessing of it in effect: As to the rest the common people ought to distinguish the certaine and the infallible propositions from prejudicate opinions, which may be disputable. It's a common opinion, that there are no miracles wrought in the world, and that there shall be never more. This negative is uncertaine, and the prooffe neither assured or necessary. When all the miracles which the Jesuits doe attest to have bin wrought in the midst of the Indies should be true, they would not conclude the least of their errors; no more then the annuall miracle at the poole of *Shiloh* gave authority to Pharisaisme. Much lesse can

H

they

they draw any consequence from the martyrdome which some of them have suffered by the hands of Indian Idolaters. Their Martyrs will never goe peere with ours. When a man suffers death under an opinion that it will be meritorious, I am afraid he is a Martyr of his owne merit, rather then that of Christs, the punishment gives him no higher a tytle then that of his beliefe, or of his profession.

There is as yet one point more which we may as yet remarke. To the question where the Church was before the last Reformation, we ordinarily answer that it was in Poperie, as if Poperie were all the world, whereas it holds but one little corner. As if the Church could not be in *Africa*, or in *Asia*, where Popery was not. In effect we deprive our selves of a very easie answer, and doe a great injury to an infinity of Grecian, Arminian, and Abissin Churches, and others in which the Church of God resided; Churches who confesse the Trinitie of Persons, the Verity of the two Natures in Christ, and all the

the points of Mediation. Churches which seek their justification by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ onely: Churches which practise the same Sacraments with us, and admit no other eating of the body of Christ but that which is spirituall: Churches, in which nothing is wanting that is essential to the faith, but if corruptions have made them deformed 'tis not so exorbitant but that the Church might as well subsist therein as in the Roman which held nothing but on part of the West.

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### CHAP. 17.

*The conversion of a Romane Catholick is now more difficult then in the beginning of the Reformation.*

**T**HE Reformed Church had in times past, enough to open the doore to Empires, and to whole nations, who presented themselves in crowds to enter in, at this day it is a wonder to heare of any one Profelyte. Mens judgements vary upon

the causes of so great a difference, That novelty provoked the spirits to harken to this Religion, so full of admirable Paradoxes, whereas now use hath brought in the disgust. That the Reformation came when the *Vatican* insolently tyrannised the Potentates, and the people glad to shake off the yoke, and that the behaviour of the first reformed had a lustre which rendered his Religion amiable. That their zeale which let this Religion at so high a prise, alighted in many a violent passion to seeke this treasure. That persecution whose *anti-peristasis* redoubled their zeal, hath more augmented the Church, then prosperity the most triumphant. Like the Ark, which did more miracles whilst that it wandered in the wilderness under a pavilion of goates hair, more then after when it was, placed under the wainscot of Cedar laid over with plaites of Gold. That the miraculous subsisting of the Church among so many powerfull oppositions ravished the eyes of all the world, seeing a burning bush, and yet remain unconsumed

med. That the voice of the Martyrs  
 shook the prisons, and the tribunalls, the  
 fires in which they were sacrificed served  
 for lights to show many the way to hea-  
 ven. And finally God which makes the  
 winds blow in such places and seasons as  
 seems good to him hath bounded the  
 course of his grace, and forbidden his word  
 to passe further. But to this one may adde  
 that the prudence of the Romane Clergy  
 hath choaked divers abuses, and sent to the  
 Assise many blasphemies which made the  
 most stupid to abhorre them. And above  
 all, time hath furnished them with many  
 sleights (unknown to their forefathers be-  
 ing buried in ignorance of learning) for to  
 shun the most manifest truths, and give a  
 colour to opinions the most absurd, sus-  
 pending the judgements of the clearest  
 sighted, between the miracles of *Moses*,  
 and the cunning of the inchanters. Finally  
 they had many principalls, and interpreta-  
 tions which they have left, acknowledging  
 that they were contrary to themselves,;  
 in times past they were content to make

the Scripture their judge ; at this day they accuse it of incompetency and decline its jurisdiction. This principall being rejected it is more difficult to reduce a Roman Catholick to the Orthodox Religion.

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C H A P. 18.

*Why the conversion of a Jew at this day, then it was at the beginning of Christian Religion.*

**T**Hese reasons are also those in part of the pertinacity of the Jews if ever this nation ought to render it self to the obedience of the faith, it is at this day that it ought to be a dispersion of more then 1500 yeares, far longer then all precedent calamities, and in which they have neither had temple nor sacrifice to expiate their finnes. The vain expectation of their pretended Messias so oftentimes frustrated, since the prefixed tearme of his coming; of which they know not what

to think. The confusion happened in their genealogies, so great that namely, when their Messias should come, they cannot know him, not being able to mark any family that's descended from *David*. These testimonies I say of their foolish hope ought to make them leave their stubbornnes more then ever. And notwithstanding their obstinacy was never so great. Nay it is now harder to convert a Jew, then in times past before so long a lapse of time which as yet makes them requoil farther from their pretensions. The weaknesse of their cause hath made them ingenious to strengthen themselves therein. Since the subversion of their Republick some yeares after the ascention of our Lord, perceiving that the time belied their hope, and being ashamed not to see some glimpse which might promise them the effect; on the other side seeing that Christianity spread it self farre and near principall under the Empire of *Constantine* the great, they sought all the meanes they could imagine to retain their nation still in their blind-

nesse. Now in as much as that they were  
 condemned in their own Maximes, and  
 namely by the interpretation of their *Rab-*  
*bins*. They took counsell how to abrogate  
 them, and to substitute others of a contrary  
 opinion to them so then, so that where a  
 passage of the ancient Testament speaking  
 of the *Messias*, was taken in its true sence  
 by the ancient Jewes, the Modern have  
 changed the exposition. Our Lord for to  
 prove Christ to be more then man alled-  
 geth that *David* called him Lord, alled-  
 ging to this purpose *Psalme 110.* this pas-  
 sage was not then in dispute. For the Jews  
 then of that time confessed that those  
 terms could not have relation but to the  
*Messias*. But those at this day overthrow  
 this interpretation which their forefathers  
 did agree unto without reply, so that up-  
 on all those passages which the Apostle ci-  
 ted in favour of Christ, the Jews disputed  
 the application rather then the explication  
 but now they contest both, having char-  
 ged their principalls. There is another  
 trick which they use to make Christian  
 Religion



religion to be suspected both to their nation, and also to all others hath been to seek out all the passages of the new Testament which seemes to differ from the ancient in some historicall circumstances, as in the date of yeares, in the names of places, in the numbring of persons, and such like, pretending by this difference to convince the Apostolicall writings of falshood, and so by consequence to annihilate Christianity.

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C H A P. 19.

*Why the opinions the most erronious are maintained with greater obstinacy, then those which are lesse absurd. The plea of these which burnt their children. Pretents for transubstantiation.*

**T**He more monstrous is the errour the more pertinacious is the belief when once it hath taken place in the spirit; the reason is because the falshood the most enormous are made important

portant by the highest pretexts of truth and are not authoris'd but by the most undoubted maxims of religion under the colour of this soveraign power, they make men renounce their judgement of reason, nay more disavow their own proper senses. If ever there were an error incapable it was the impiety of the Israelites who burnt their own children as a sacrifice pleasing to God. Neverthelesse neither nature which cried out against those horrors, nor the threatnings frō heaven which condemned them could not hinder their practise. But it needs must be that some violent passion which brake in sunder the strongest chains of naturall affections was moved with some powerfull engine, cloaked over with some very specious pretext. Their apology might be that the chiefest good of man consists in the remission of his sinnes; that this remission could not be without the effusion of blood. That it were a folly to go about to appease God by the blood of beasts, and therefore some humane sacrifice must be offered. That  
this

this sacrifice ought to be innocent; and that a greater innocence could not be found, then in a little infant. That to be of the proper substance of the man which did present it, and so it was necessary that his offering should be offered in expiation. But if the sacrifice ought to be but Eucharisticall, then it were but to mock God, to present him a calf or a pigeon, his Majesty requiring more noble offerings; nay more demanding our own bowels, and that they knew not how to offer him a more precious present then the life of their own children. Under this pretext and such like, this abomination passed for the most ardent piety which a man may show to God, equallising or rather surpassing all which the Scripture extolls in *Abraham* for an action of this quality: So that the excelsse of error augments the perswasion.

The article of transubstantiation is produced under the name of the most excellent and most dreadfull misterie of all religion, bearing upon its front the expresse words

words of the sonne of God, whose presence is fearfull to the Angels, arming it selfe with the power of his omnipotency, inclosing within its titles, all the Majesty of heaven, and the salvation of the whole world. By how much the representation of this opinion is prodigious, by so much the more it makes them believe it mysterious.


From thence it comes that that belief is maintained with more pertinacity then any error whose absurdity is lesse apparant. Also the believing hereof is esteemed so much the more meritorious, by how much lesse the object is to be believed, as indeed that man who firmly believes this transubstantiation should have (were it true) more faith then ever had all the Patriarks and Apostles together.



## The third Section.

### CHAPTER I.

*what manner of knowledge or instruction is  
most naturall to the vulgar.*

 W O men may know one and the same truth, but in divers manners. A Country man may know that an Eclypse ought to happen on such a day, having read it in an Almanack; but that is not called Science as an Astronomer who knows by demonstration foreseeing the Eclypse in his causes. He is not learned in religion who knows all the matters, but he that knows them in the manner, they ought to be known; on which many faults are to be observed.

There are two traditions or wayes of  
instruction

instruction, on which the vulgar repose themselves. Sentences and generall propositions. 2 Histories, in these two consists almost all the knowledge of the common people. As for the first head the ignorant content themselves to know the generalities, because the intelligence of particular points requires a sharper sight and a more fixed contemplation. Its easier to an Idiot to say *These Things*, then to restrain this generality to its species, to know how to give each one of them its proper name. To the other the instruction which is given them by history please them because of its facility, for it consists in actions and circumstances perceptible to the imagination; so that all their knowledge lodgeth either in copious generalities or in the single *individuum*s: but the points which are as it were *medium*s between these two wearies more the spirit obliging them to reason, and to take the measure, weight and number, and the names of all things. This is the cause the vulgar cast it off. In the mean time many are Orthodoxall

doxall in the generality of a point, who erre grossely in the particulars thereof; witnesse the article of providence upon which the common people will give a cleare opinion in respect of the generality of this doctrine; but in the particular points imagine a world of absurdities.

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## CHAP. 2.

*Of the superficial knowledge of each point of  
Of religion. Of their definitions, and of  
their exact Knowledge. An example in  
the doctrine of the Eucharist.*

**T**H E ignorance of generall as well as particular points proceed from this, that popular spirits learn an infinity of descriptions, but very few definitions; I speak not in favour of subtil and artificiall definitions of which every one is not capable. But certainly it is impossible to have the true knowledge of a point without knowing how to mark and define the essence, if not exactly, yet at least, very near the truth.

When

When a man can say sinne is the poyson of the soule, and knows how to give it a hundred epithites of this sort, yet hath he not learnt what sinne is, this ignorance is entertained by a multitude of Preachers who are content to declaim by descriptions and abundance of metaphors never showing but the superficies of matters in stead of setting forth the dimensions. I leave the points which are elevated above all definition. The imagination of Idiots who not understanding what is properly that eternity, although they know that God hath neither beginning nor end, believe him neverthelesse to have more age then he had foure thousand yeares since. This point and many others are not the mark at which we shoot. I could show that the greatest part of our differencies proceed from the ignorance of definitions. If the Romish Church comprehended intercession to be a sacerdotall act, and that Christ prayes in quality of a soveraign Priest dead for us; and this function consists in the comparition of his person, &c.

She



She would never transport to others the title of intercessor. But to make you see how many excellent matters the exact intelligence of one point furnisheth in respect of a superficial knowledge, we will produce only one example. In the words of the Lord in the Eucharist, the most ignorant understand sufficiently, that the flesh of Christ therein is presented unto us as meat, and not only in this respect, but as meat of sacrifice, for it is properly in this quality that it is offered unto us. And the termes of our Lord carry a manifest allusion to the flesh of sacrifices which they gave to eat to those for whom it had been sacrificed. A meat which the Jewes because of its importancy preferred before all other aliments. But you must know they did not participate but of the Eucharisticall sacrifices: for the people eat not the flesh of the sacrifices of expiation although that they were offered for them, the sacrificers onely did participate thereof. Nay more, a sacrificer when he offered for his own sins had no part in the sacrifice, but was to

burn it intirely. And which is more, in the  
solemne expiation, in which the blood of  
beasts was carried into the tabernacle for  
the universall remission of sinnes, no man  
might tast of the flesh of the sacrifice, the  
law commanding that it should be carried  
out of the camp far from the people, and  
there consumed in fire. In brief, it was  
a maxime in the law, that none of those for  
whom the sacrifice of expiation was offered  
should eat thereof. But our Lord by a  
disposition new, and unknown to the law,  
presents us to eat of the flesh of the sacrifice  
of expiation, the body which hath  
been delivered for our sinnes. For the law  
forbidding those which were culpable to  
participate of the expiations shewed the  
nullity of them; and taught that those sacrifices  
were unprofitable, seeing that  
those in whose favour they were offered  
had no nourishment by them: But Jesus  
Christ shews that his sacrifice is fruitfull,  
seeing that sinners participate thereof,  
marking in evident termes the difference  
which we see between the blood of the new  
alliance

alliance given for drink, and the bloud of Legall sacrifices whose participation was rigorously forbidden; the law forbidding to drink any blood gives this reason, that the blood was shed for the expiation of sinnes, and so ought not to be employed for nourishment; to the contrary, our Lord invites us to drink his blood, because that it is shed for the remission of sinnes; Employing (for to oblige us to the participation of blood) the same reason for which it was interdicted in the law. This consideration may furnish many others whereby to comprehend the subject of the Eucharist.

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## C H A P. III.

*Of the distinction, conjunction, and Arranging of points of religion.*

**T**He beasts which divide not the hoofe are uncleane by the Law ; The religion of a man which knowes not how to distinguish the points thereof cannot be pure. Distinctions which consist in vain subtilties, in divisions, and foolish subdivisions, to the cleaving of a haire, who under colour of narrowly sifting them, reduce the most solid matters into dust and atomes, which in stead of clearing the sight, gathers up nothing but dust to cast into the eyes of the simple ; overturning the soundest propositions, under colour of upholding them, which under pretext of directing the spirit, shewes it so many different paths, that it knowes not which to resolve on ; these distinctions tend not to our end. On the other side the vulgar scornes many distinctions, the ignorance of

of which is subject to a thousand errors. An idiot which knowes little or nothing of the difference between Faith and Charity cannot understand the point of Justification, for if Faith and Charitie are but one selfe-same thing, we are then justified by Charity, which is a pernicious consequence.

But if one should aske why Charity cannot justifie as well as Faith, the reason is manifest to him who knowes how Faith and Charity are distinguished. The property of Faith is to receive. The property of Charity is to give. By Faith we receive God, giving himselfe to us with all his benefits. By Charity we offer our selves unto him, and all that is in us. Now God would not have us justified by giving to him, for then grace would be no more grace ( and mans boasting should not be excluded ) but by the only receiving and acceptation of the righteousness which he presents us ; and this receiving is an act of Faith, of which Charity is incapable. The common people also confound the

legall righteousnesse with the Evangelical, sanctification with justification, not taking heed that in the contexture of the same passage there is found a word of the Law, and a word of the Gospell chained together, but which ought to be carefully distinguished ; As in these words of Jesus Christ, *If thou wilt enter into life, keepe the commandements* ; this was the Law which spake, and not the Gospell, nay, the promises of the Law are mortall to whomsoever accepts the condition.

He who transgresseth one point of the Law, transgresseth the whole Law ; As he which strikes the heart only, or the lungs only, or the braines only, doth for all that give a mortall attaint to the body. So all the parts of faith make but one undivided body, and he which is ignorant only of one, is ignorant of all the others. In the meane time, he who would examine the popular spirits should find few who know their religion intirely ; few there be whose knowledge is not deficient in some point : but the knowledge it selfe of all the parts of religion

religion doth not as yet serve to a true intelligence thereof, if one knowes not their conjunctions, their relations and their correspondencies. All the points of religion are relatives. Sometimes a point considered in the conjunction of another carries a sence contrary to that which it had being separated. The Law contemplated apart is a letter which kills: joyned with the Gospell is a Restorative to the soule. Faith in its absolute essence is a part of Sanctification, and in this quality justifies not a sinner: in its relation to Christ, it is the instrument of our Justification. Besides the relation which the parts of Religion have the one to the other, each one of them, and altogether have relation to one Totall, as members to a body, whose structure results from their composition, proportions, ligaments and order. But many know all the parts of religion, who understand nothing in the totall, because they see all the pieces thereof only in detaile, but not in their conjunction.

A man who should know the number

of all the kindes of creatures the essential forme of each one of them, their proper causes, the particular end, and the effect to which they serve, the ranke, and place which they hold in the world, would reade as in a booke, for each creature is as a character, having its forme, and its distinct propriety, and altogether being ranged in divers places produce such a frame of words which are intelligible by us, if our ignorance confound them not. He that knoweth the points of Religion, but is ignorant in what order he ought to ranke them, resembleth an ideot who understandeth the sound of every Letter of the Alphabet, without knowing how to join them to make entire words thereof. Religion as it is in the knowledge of many, consisteth in the multitude of matters confusedly heaped together in the mind, without symmetry, or proportion, without any form either of building or body, the head and feet being confounded. Some of our controversies concern the same order, and rank of points. The Romane Catholicks coming



ming to contend with us, begin voluntarily with the question of the Church, giving it the highest place, to the end they may make it passe as a rule, and principle of faith. But the Article of the Church holdeth not the first rank in the Creed.

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### CHAP. III.

*Of those which believe the truth, by vertue of a false principle, or of some passage of Scripture which toucheth not the question.*

**M**Any believe the truth by a false faith. The Turk believes God, the creation, providence, the immortality of the soul, Christ born of a virgin, a great Prophet, and the word of God, because the Alchoran saith it. These points are true in themselves: but the belief which he hath thereby cannot be formally true, because it depends on a false principle. Truth may not be believed for a lyes sake.

One may not commend them which  
endeavour

endeavour to amplifie the Oracles of the *Sybills*, to the end they may make them speak more advantagiously in favour of the Christian Religion. Nor the pious frauds of them which under colour of proving the immortality of the soul, have supposed fabulous apparitions. It importeth not onely what we believe, but also why we believe it. A man which believeth there is a God, because Philosophy, or naturall reason teacheth him so, hath not a Theologicke faith, although the believe which he hath touching God, be true in it self, and in its principles.

He that believeth all the Articles of Christianity, because great Doctors believe them, or onely because the Church holds them for true, hath built his faith upon mans testimonie. 'Tis a complaint of a person eminent in humane learning, that being Orthodox in the Article of Christs Divinity, notwithstanding in his interpretation, and Paraphrases upon the new Testament, he did enervate, or allude, as much as was possible for him, all the most manifest

nifest passages which authorise the believe of this point. But on the other side, the world is full of people which upon every sort of matter alledge a multitude of Texts, though oft times the twentieth part suit not to the subject. They which believe a truth, but ground it upon a passage of Scripture, which maketh not to the purpose, believe the truth falsely. That which they believe is very true: but that by vertue whereof they believe it, is not so. For the Scripture ill applyed is no more Scripture, but a perverting thereof: although it be alleadged to prove the truth which it teacheth in other passages. And 'twere to be wished that many would bring hither as much seare and discretion, as they abound in impertinent quotations. But the vulgar often suffer themselves to be led more by passages which come by the by, then by those which lead straight to the mark. I have scene a man which could never be brought from the Invocation of Saints, for any Text alleadged unto him, unlesse when one quoted to him the passage

page of *Eſay* 63. *ver.* 16. which notwithstanding is not the moſt concluding of all thoſe which are made uſe of in this controverſie. A Rabbin converted to the faith, and who had writ againſt thoſe of his nation, found the Trinity and the two natures of Chriſt in the four Hebrew letters of the word Jehovah; And made almoſt more eſteem of this Cabbaliſtick proof, then of all the paſſages of the old Teſtament, infinitely more cleare, and expreſſe upon this ſubject. That which remains to be ſaid requires another Parentheſis.

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### CHAP. V.

*Every point of Religion hath its peculiar reasons, examples, and conſiderations to this purpoſe.*

**A**LL the points of Religion, and all the leſſer branches of them, have every one their particular reaſon.

And

And the Scripture saith not only that it is so, but also how and why it is so.

It gives us not simple positions, but teacheth by demonstration, and arguments, even to the resolving of objections which may be moved to the contrary. This is not then sufficient, when a man knows all his Religion by Propositions or Maximes, though conceived in proper Scripture terms, if he know not also the particular reason of every one of them. And to render a reason of our faith, is not only to acknowledge the Scripture, which affirms such or such points, but also to shew why these points which the Scripture affirmeth are such, and that they are the causes of every one of them in particular. Divinity is all full of demonstrative arguments. They which have but a naked knowledge of conclusions, see well the face and external shape of Religion: But the beating of its arteries, the spirit which moves it, and the faculties which stir within it, are visible to them who know the reasons where-with it is animated.

It

It is not to the purpose to alleadge, that one ought not to demand a reason what God saith, and that it is enough to believe what the Scripture pronounceth is true. This objection is of value as touching points the search whereof is forbidden us; as Why God sheweth mercy more to one then to another, and for other matters which we may call transcendent, which God hath bounded with præcípices, & environed with high barricadoes which hinder us from entring in thereat. But in those whereof the Scripture teaches us the reasons, 'tis a foolish modesty to reason against his command which obligeth us to learn them. Nay this is a manifest arrogance, to will the ignorance of those reasons the Scripture gives us thereof, under pretence of believing the Scripture simply. For the Scripture it self teacheth us to reason upon many points infinitely raised above us. When it is asked Why God permitted that sinne should enter into the world, though it were in his power to hinder it? Many reasons of this permission may

may be found, full of excellent doctrine; and saving the matters we have excepted, there is not any point of Religion, nay any particle, whereof one may not find some reason, either exprest in the Scripture, or duly averred by lawfull consequences, or resulting from the property of the subject. If there be any thing which seemeth to be out of all enquiry they are the principles of nature. As for example, The prohibitio<sup>n</sup> of marriage between brother and sister, is the voice of nature, which hath no need to be propped with reasons, since it is reason it self. And though one may always say that the Scripture would oblige men to search the alliance of the remotest races, to the end that the affections, & correspondencies of humane societie might be multiplied: w<sup>ch</sup> would not be, if marriages should be alwayes contracted within the same family. Which would by this shame restrain the license which might grow from the facility of their conversation. That so many naturall relations met in one man, which might have brought the title of father and  
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uncle together, would have brought a thousand confusions in the world. That the same proximity being disputed amongst them which are of the same blood, would have produced divers strifes in families, for the reason as that of the straight line, which oblige the brother to marry his half sister: that the woman who in case of injury, or dissention might find a refuge with their brothers, had lost his refuge if the brotherhood had been confounded in the marriage. And other reasons which one might alleadge for this law.

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C H A P<sup>I</sup> VI.

*Of the exercise of the mind in every point of Religion. The default of the vulgar, and of preachers herein. The Scripture speaks by proofs.*

**G**OD would that our knowledge should be discursive in part; and that this faculty of the soule, which passeth



seth from one subject to another, for to discern them, compare them together, and give judgement thereof, might also be sanctified by this exercise in matters of Religion. But because it is more difficult to reason upon a point, then to conceive it nakedly and barely; the common people is contented to heare that such a thing is true, or good, or just, without searching why or how it is such. The ignorant love onely to heare a thing affirmed, or denied: insomuch that to the understanding of a proposition or assertion thus naked, there is need of but a bare apprehension, or understanding of words, without other trouble of mind. Whereupon they are delighted in maximes, and proverbs, because it is not needfull to conceive the sense thereof, easie to whosoever understandeth the words. For 'tis to be presupposed they are grounded on reason, and 'tis enough to hold them for true, without any other form of enquiry. This same facility is the cause we have more talkers then preachers.

Provided they stretch out a point by a

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long train of equivalent rearms, that they delate a text into Paraphrases, that they heape together a great masse of sentences of Scripture, they think they have worthily handled, and the vulgar abide therewith satisfied. But the interpretation thereof requires much more then this. Certainly Jesus Christ himselfe, and the most excellent instruments which have spok by his spirit, have not contented themselves to pronounce the affirmative, or negative upon any point, but besides have shewed the reasons thereof. If they reach that the worship of God ought to be spirituall; they give this prooffe thereof, to wit that God is a spirit. If the alleadge to make the Jewes see that the *Messias* ought to die, and rise again, the words of the Psalmest, *thou shalt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption*: they frame thereof an argument which imports that this Oracle cannot relate but to *David*, or to Christ, that the body of *David* had notoriously felt the same corruption which death brings to other men. So that this prophecy could not belong but

but to Christ. If they say that man is not justified by the Law. they prove it by the end of the Law, which is to manifest sinne. If they declare that Circumcision doth not justifie; they shew it by the example of *Abraham*, who was justified before he was circumcised: So that his circumcision being after his justification could not have produced it. If they affirm that there was a Law before that of *Moses*, they argue that where there is no law, there is no sin: Now we read that there was sin before *Moses*: this is proved, because that death which is the wages of sinne reigned from *Adam* to *Moses*. If they maintaine free Election; they produce the decree given before the infants had none either good or evil. If they maintain that the Covenant of grace could not be disanulled by the Law; they make it cleare that it did precede the Law foure hundred and thirty yeares. If they publish that Christ is greater then the Angells; they prove it by his titles which were never conferred upon them. If they preach the weaknesse of

Jewish priesthood, they take it from this, that the Scripture hath substituted for it another, of an order altogether different to it, after the order of *Melchisedech*: for if perfection had been in the Leviticall Priesthood, what need had there been that another Priest should arise, which was according to the order of *Aron*? If they teach that Jesus Christ ought to die, they note, that where there is a Testament, there the death of the Testatour ought to intervene, before the heires can have benefit thereof. In brief if they speak of the resurrection, or of other points of faith, their discourse never consists in bare assertions, but in reasons, and demonstrative proofs.

## CHAP VII.

*Of Popular reasons, as well in the Romane Religion, as amongst the vulgar of the Orthodox Churches. The difference betwixt the maximes of faith, and those of charity.*

**T**Hose which among the vulgar reason upon matters of Religion, are accustomed to conceive them as reasons one may call popular. These reasons are taken from the superficies, not from the very substance of truth. This is the reason why oft times they are found false: although their facility render them plausible to the ignorant. If it were needfull one might shew that the Romane Religion is for the most part propt up by popular reasons. Popular is the comparison of Intercessours, which are employed towards the Grantees of this world, brought for the Invocation of Saints. Popular is the question whether we ought to condemn our ancestors, and so many souls, which hold the  
Faith

faith we at this day disallow. Popular are the marks, under which they represent the Church: For the antiquity, multitude, locall succession, are not essentiall properties thereof. Popular are the austerities, fastings, scourgings, and externall mortification of the Monks profession. Popular are the images and the title which is given them, that they are the booke of Ideors.

The most ordinary reason which authoriseth the reason of the common people is that of charity. Prayers for the dead have been covered under this pretence; and many sometime have extended even to hell, praying even for the damned, not to deliver them wholly from pain (knowing that is impossible) but for to procure for them some diminution thereof: whereunto charity carrieth them. The maximes of charity are more perswasive, and efficacious amongst the common people, then the maximes of faith. The reason thereof is, because that those of faith are more removed from the appearance, and have not so much relation with reason and naturall affection

fection as those of charity, which are more intelligible, and more agreeing with the common notion of men. Notwithstanding to say truth, every act of Religion which is undertaken without faith, is also without charity. And the charity of the ignorant, is a strange fire which is not acceptable at the altar.

But our discourse properly concerns them who being orthodox in points of Religion, prop not up the belief of them but upon popular reasons, such as are similitudes and arguments of this kind. Those which are found in Scripture are not of this rank, for the authority thereof makes them become demonstrations, and undoubted proofs. But all others have no other vertue thē to clear being besides uncapable to prove; notwithstanding the vulgar will sooner believe for one bare comparison, which maketh no proof, then for a reason well concluding. This is it that similitudes, particular examples, and the like arguments have an appearance manifest to the sense, and therefore move beyond essentiall reasons, which are

not perceivable but by the understanding. Notwithstanding this faith is not more solid. The man which conceives a point under the sole resemblance of truth, and not in the proper essence thereof, understandeth it not as he ought. This is to have a true opinion, but not a true knowledge. And more deceive themselves by this meanes, presuming they have the knowledge of a point, instead whereof they have but the opinion. It sufficeth not to say their opinion is conformable to the truth: For truth is not known by opinion. Whosoever desires the knowledge thereof ought to endeavour the understanding rather of one concluding and formall reason, then tenthousand Arguments which have but a bare resemblance of truth.

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## C H A P. VIII.

*Of those who perswade themselves of the truth by false reasons. Of those which falsely accuse themselves.*

**I**T comes to passe that many believe a truth which is grounded on Scripture, but conceive it under a false reason. He believes the truth which holds we are justified by faith, and not by works. But if he believe that faith hath a prerogative, because it is more excellent then works, this reason is false. For though faith be more excellent then works, the excellency thereof is not the true cause why it justifies rather then works. All the vulgar spirits know how to maintain a truth in expresse termes of Scripture. But in that which the Scripture saith, they often imagine a reason either false or impertinent. So the friends of *Job* did maintaine Gods cause, his power, prudence, wisdom, and justice : but by false presupposition. And scarcely

scarcely could one have said that they err'd, if God himselfe had not interposed his judgement in the dispute. So some to exalt the grace of God, towards them, accuse themselves to be the greatest sinners in the world: imitating the Apostle *S. Paul*, who speaketh of himself in this manner, although that *Judas*, and those that had crucified the Prince of glory were (without doubt) more guilty. Now Saint *Paul* ranketh not himself simply amongst the greatest sinners, but amongst them which had not sinn'd but through ignorance. 'Tis true that Originall sin is equall naturally in all men, and 'tis the grace of God which restrains many therein. But that to amplify this grace, a man should accuse himself of actuall sinnes which he never committed, this is a foolish sort of falshood. The water of sprinkling which purified the unclean, did defile those which were clean. If we would exalt the mercy of God, we have enow true arguments without searching imaginary for it. If we would justify his severity, we find enow true crimes

life

in our life, without imposing false ones upon us. Whosoever will speak of God ought to speak according unto God, that is to say, according to the truth, otherwise it is to speak against God. To maintain truth with false reasons, is to imitate the proceeding of *Rebecca*, who to the end the Oracle might be found true, had recourse to an abusive means, using a fraudulent superstition. There is nothing wherein one ought to be so circumspect, as in speaking for the truth. He that undertakes to maintain it, is subject to a grievous censure, if he acquits not himself thereof pertinently.

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## CHAP. IX.

*Of points whereof one ought to know the causes. Many matters of Religion are ridiculous without their causes. The understanding whereof decides many questions. From whence come the greatest part of errors.*

**T**He matters of Religion are known principally either by their causes, or by their effects. The Deity, as being the highest cause of all, is not demonstrable but by its effects. Whose decrees ought also to be sought rather in their effects, then in their causes. But the other points which are subordinate are represented to us with their causes: which teach us the true reasons of every one of them. And in this the learned differ from the common people: For the vulgar sees not the quality or truth of a point, but in the effects and streames: But to comprehend it well, it behoves to see it in the spring.

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Many matters of Religion are ridiculous without their causes. All the ceremoniall law, if one knows not the reasons thereof, is nothing but a heap of unprofitable burdens: The Temple but a shambles, and the priesthood but a vaine occupation. In lieu thereof considering them in their causes, every thing there is important even to the least circumstances. VVhosoever shall remember that Jesus Christ suffered out of the City of *Jerusalem*, will admire the providence of this Law, which ordained that the sacrifices of oblations, whereof the blood ought to be carried into the holy place, should be consumed out of the compassse of the Camp, or of the City.

We know that our Lord in the dayes of his flesh, was environed with sorrow and feare: But if we know not the cause thereof, we make him inferiour to many martyrs who bare a smiling face amidst their punishments. The Jew understands nothing in the Ceremoniall Lawes: for although he knowes the number thereof, all their particular forms, he is ignorant of the  
cause

cause thereof, not knowing that they were given to serve onely till the coming of Christ. The true meanesto well understand a point, is to learn the causes thereof; and the understanding of them is a sovereign eye-salve to cleare ones self of many difficulties. Saint *Paul* sheweth by the finall cause of the Law, that it is incapable to justifie men : for (saith he) the Law came because of transgressions, to wit to discover not to cover them. And indeed they which think to be justified by the works of the Law, know not why it was given. The Law was never given to justifie, *Gal. 3. 21.* on the contrary its office is to condemne men.

A great part of errours which wast Religion, and likewise of them which trouble it at this day, proceeds from this, that the cause is taken for the effect, or the effect is taken for the cause. Instead that the Sabbath is made for man, Pharisaisme concluded that man was made for the Sabbath. Instead that meats were not unclean, but because they were forbidden,

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superstition, believed them to be forbidden because they were unclean. Instead that the altar sanctified the offering they would by their Maximes, that the offering did sanctifie the altar. Instead that the Scripture sanctifieth the Church, it is maintained that the Church, sanctifieth the Scripture. Instead that justification produceth works, they hold that works produce justification. And 'tis likewise disputed whether faith depend on election or election depend on faith. This turning topsie turvy is ordinary amongst the ignorant, who believe that the person is acceptable for his works, instead that the works are acceptable for the person.

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## CHAP. X.

*Of the ignorance of the vulgar, who believe that one ought not to search nor give any other reason of the points of Religion, than the will of God.*

**I**F twere not the will of God that we should know why, and how he worketh, we could not know how our Lord could be born of a Virgin, yet notwithstanding this is one of the prime Articles of our faith. He hath not said why instead of causing the *Hebrews* to passe when they came out of Egypt by the Philistines country, which was the straight way to enter into *Canaan*, he led them by a great circuit full of wandrings and inconveniences. Nor why having given to *Abraham* the land of the *Amorites*, his posterity ought not to have possessed it but at the end of 400 yeares, *Gen. 15*. Nor why the bill of divorce was permitted the Jewes. Nor why he disapproved *Dauids* designe touching



touching the building of the Temple. And a thousand other effects of his providence, whereof he would have us know the causes.

Many think they know enough thereof, when they referre all things simply to the will of God, which they say sufficeth for all reason: and that in every point, be it historicall, or dogmaticall, when one asks why it is so, one ought to content himself with saying that God would have it so, or hath so ordained. This Maxime teacheth ignorance under the shaddow of modesty. By this meanes there's no question but may be avoided in two words: and the veriest idiot shall be capable to give a solution thereof. 'Tis true the will of God is the soveraigne cause of all things, and the onely reason of a great part thereof. But this answer suffiseth not for all questions, nay in many matters it is impertinent. When one asketh how *Abraham* was justified, this would be an absurdity to answer that he was justified by the will of God, instead of saying it was by faith. An

absurdity to shew the first cause when the second is demanded. An absurdity to produce the will of God, when the question is of the formall or instrumentall cause. An absurdity to name the Architect instead of the matter. This is to annihilate the dispensation which God hath established in his works, and to breake downe those steps by which he would have us climb up unto him. To think to leape over all at one leape, is extreme folly. A man that alledgeth nothing but the will of God upon a Subject proposed, understands not what this will of God is. For to understand it, 'tis necessary to know wherein it consisteth, and how it concerns the matter in question. Now the understanding of this point presupposeth the knowledge of second causes, by which the will of God worketh. He that alledgeth the second causes, and gives reasons thereof, alledgeth the will of God: For God hath willed that such things should be so for such reasons, and these reasons are one part of his will. When the Disciples  
asked

asked why they could not deliver the man possessed, the vulgar answer would import, because it pleased not God. But our Lord notes their incredulity, as a cause of this inability, and shewes fasting and prayer as the meanes necessary to the expulsion of the Devill. When Saint *Paul* was buffeted by Sathan he did not simply understand that such was the will of God: but that his power was accomplished in weaknesse.

When we search the causes of our salvation, This would be a dangerous proceeding to desire to mount up to Election without passing by the middle meanes. The will of God is the first reason, but the last answer one ought to give to a question.

## C H A P X I.

*Objections of the vulgar touching the reasons  
Scripture expresseth not, and how we may  
know them.*

**T**He Scripture is full of Lawes and mysteries, whereof we know not the reasons. We read of divers ceremonies, divers points of history and doctrine, the particular reasons whereof are not yet found out. But oft times we abuse our selves, by believing that the Scripture discovers not the reason thereof, under colour that our ignorance hindreth us from seeing them. This is a common objection in the mouth of the vulgar, when they heare men reason upon any matter, to alleadge that this reason is not at all exprest in Scripture. Certainly the Scripture expresseth not why the Law permitted Homicides confin'd within the Cities of Refuge, to return to their houses after the death of the high Priest. And notwithstanding, besides po-  
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litick reasons which may be given for this Law, It is impudence to deny that it meant to represent the efficacy of Christs death. But to produce an example more formall to this purpose, the reason for which our Lord was put in a new sepulchre, wherein never any one was buried, is notwithstanding lesse exprest: Yet notwithstanding we say that the wisdom of God would prevent the malice of the Jews, who not able to deny the truth of his resurrection, might have disputed the cause thereof, pretending that he had recovered life by touching the bones of some Prophet, as he that was raised in the grave of *Elisha*. This reason is not grounded but upon conjecture, but of so great appearance, that it were a shame to reject it. In many things the very effect shews its cause. If any man ask why Jesus Christ trusted *Judas* with the bag, whose covetousnes he knew, rather then another of his disciples; the reason thereof is evident to him that considers that the convenience of this office rendered his treason so much the more

inexcusable. VVhen the Scripture tells not at all why God permitted sinne, why he would harden *Pharaoh*, why he suffers the vessells of wrath; the effects which proceed thence, shew that sin is the cause thereof.

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## CHAP. XII.

*Of the prudence that is requisite in the examination of points where the cause is uncertaine. Of a Ly. whether Satan made Pilates wife speak for the innocence of Iesus Christ.*

**I**T is true that one ought carefully to take heed of those causes, and reasons which are not plain unto us, but by a conjecturall appearance: for the consequences thereof may be foolish and dangerous. Some have thought that *Jacob* in all the proceedings he made to gaine his fathers blessing, was inspired by the spirit of God; But the consequence thereof sounds very  
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ill. For then it must be, that the Holy Ghost had dictated the deceitfull words which came from *Jacobs* mouth. Now God is an enemy of lies. He may command to kill, but not to pronounce a falsehood : although a bare ly be not so bad as manslaughter. The reason thereof is, that manslaughter may be sometimes an act of Justice ; but a ly can never be truth. And therefore God himself may kill, but he can never ly. On the other side many have believed, that the dreame which came to *Pilates* wife, proceeded from Satan, who foreseeing his own ruine in the death of Christ, assaied to hinder the sentence. If speculations might be received, I could say that Satan might be in doubt of the qualitie of Jesus Christ, seeing in him so great wonders as constrained them to call him the son of God, and then againe an extreame annihilation which seemed incompatible with his divinity : so that he thought to overwhelm him with torments, as he got his desire on the first *Adam* by flatteries. That although he knew that

the future death of Christ was foretold by the Prophets, by the sacrifices and other figures, and by the faith of the ancient fathers : notwithstanding he might imagine, that as *Isaac* upon the point he was to be sacrificed by the expresse command of God, was exempted from death, some such like thing might befall *Jesus Christ*. I might also say, that *Satan* having the day before procured the death of *Christ*, and employed *Judas* to this purpose, it is very incredible that he changed his mind in so short a time. But to come nearer unto the businesse, this dreame which happened to *Pilates* wife is inserted in the history as proceeding from an extraordinary cause. If this cause be uncertain, yet 'tis dangerous to attribute to the power of *Satan*, that which might proceed from the inspiration of God. By the same reason before alleadged we may conclude, that *Pilate* as well as his wife, was induced by *Satan* to pronounce *Christ* innocent. But certainly I had rather take the Testimony of his innocence, for the voice of God then for a subtilty of the Devil.



## CHAP. XIII.

*Of hidden reasons of some impertinent opinions on this subject.*

**A**ccording to the vulgar, all publick calamities, or particular, are but punishments of sinne, or corrections, or trialls. But they ought to be referred to many other causes which are to us unknow. VVe see not the providence of God but in parcells. If we could see his works in their totall, and join all ages together, we might perceive in their linking together an order of causes, and justice, which cannot be observed in retaile. Some hold that the personall sins of the fathers are not punished in their children, unlesse when they are made partakers thereof with them; And notwithstanding many children, never having committed any evill, have been borne with notable infirmities, which their fathers sinnes have drawn upon them. The piety of *Iosias* hindred not that  
God

God should visit in his own person, the idolatry of *Manasses*, although with such a temper as turned this punishment into mercy. In the contentions of these times, touching Gods foreknowledge, reprobation, and such like points, every man attempts to produce such an opinion that God may be found just. To this purpose all the distinctions, and reasons are sought out, which may be conceived. But if God himself should heare out of the midst of a whirlwind; that man which thinks he well pleadeth the cause of God, will be found to have maintained it with bad arguments; And without doubt, we shall heare of reasons whereof man never thought upon.

## CHAP. XIII.

*of points resulting from others, and of the multitude of consequences.*

Here is nothing wherein the vulgar is more subject to fail, then in the deduction of consequences, when one point is drawn from another. This is principally seen when one comes from a generall point to a particular: for generall Maxims are easie to the common people; But want of knowing their exceptions, they are easily deceived, when they will apply them to some particular subject. The same incongruity is often found, when they make a generall rule of a particular example. It is true that in some matters, an example alone is sufficient to make up an universall proposition; if we could produce only one man which hath been justified or saved by works, it would universally follow that the justification of all others ought

ought to be attributed to works: The reason whereof is evident; such as is the justification of one, such is the justification of all others. On the other side, if we shew but one which was justified without works; this is an universall Maxime for all. And the onely example of *Abraham* produced by Saint *Paul*, is as strong as a demonstration: but one cannot make a Maxime of this that *David* never saw the children of the righteous brought to beggerie. The policy which God set up in *Israell*, impeded this calamity, whereunto many such as *Lazarus* might be subject. *Deut.* 15. 4. *Psal.* 37. and 45.

Many think they do enough, when they draw a consequence from a principle, and then another, and finally an entire chain of conclusions; but the more a consequence is removed from its principle the more feeble and weak it is. Those which are immediately tyed to their foundation, are strongest: as in a building, the part which is nearest to the foundation, is also the firmest. Others, in what proportion they

they are removed therefrom, lose their  
force, and the last often ends in points, and  
spiders webbes, more subtile then solid.



## The fourth Section:

### CHAP. I.

*Generall considerations on the Scripture. Of  
matters which seem vulgar and of easie  
understanding.*

**G**OD would not that the Scripture  
should be very short, to the end we  
might abound in knowledge; nor over  
large, that our time might suffice to learn  
it. There was a King that read it forty  
times. Method is requisite thereunto. They  
who read it onely in retail, and in confu-  
sion, cannot comprehend the harmony and  
contexture thereof.

The vulgar ought to know that the di-  
stinction

distinction thereof into Chapters and verses,  
 having been made by godly men, but sub-  
 ject to erre, is found oftentimes irregular,  
 separating that which ought to follow in  
 a continued threed, and confounding that  
 which ought to be distinguished. As for  
 the rest, 'tis true that no man can promise  
 himself a perfect understanding thereof.  
 There are more then a thousand passages  
 which no man ever yet understood. The  
 Argument of Saint *Paul* concerning those  
 which are baptised for the dead; the fire  
 which must prove every mans work; the  
 Prison wherein *S. Peter* lodgeth the spirits  
 of all men; the thousand yeares of the  
 Revelations, from whence the Millenaries  
 have taken their names; are to us as sealed  
 letters, nor to speak of an infinite number  
 of questions in history, in Chronologie,  
 in the names of places, plants, precious  
 stones, instruments of musick, and other  
 subjects, the knowledge whereof is reser-  
 ved for heaven. But on the other side the  
 clearest passages are oft times made ob-  
 scure by prejudices, which cover as a veile  
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the eyes of many readers. The true cause which renders the Scripture dark to them, is this, because they search that which is not there. We will represent something upon this point.

Many matters of Scripture seem triviall. It saith, that the sun shines as well on the unjust, as the just; that we brought nothing into the world, & shal carry nothing therefrom: a thing which experience sufficiently teacheth. That concord is good amongst brethren; that we ought to render to every one what belongs unto him; that we ought not to do to others what we would not have done to us; and the like propositions which the law of nature teacheth the most barbarous; that he that is invited to a feast, choose not the highest place; that he which ought, should agree with his Creditor, to shun the Prison; And other instructions of prudence, of well being, and administration which every man knows without Scripture. God gave a commission to the Prophet to publish an Oracle, the tenour whereof was, that all  
flesh

flesh is as grasse, and the glory thereof as grasse: which seemes to be sufficiently known of it self, without extraordinary revelation. The 49. *Psal.* calls all the inhabitants of the earth to heare things rare and excellent, which it promiseth to discover unto them; the summe whereof is this, *that every man is mortall, that the wise man dyeth as well as the fool, that riches exempts no man from the grave;* and other sentences which the veriest ideots sufficiently know, though they never had been written: from hence it cometh that the ignorant admireth not the Scripture, because they believe it tells them nothing new; and in truth if the words thereof contained nothing but what appeares manifest, these matters would be purely vulgar: But this is that which deceives the greatest part of readers, or rather their ignorance deceives them, in that they think these propositions of scripture have no other sense, then that which is common and naturall to the grossest persons. These are, as for the terms, the same sentences which are dictated un-



to us either by nature, or by reason, or by experience, or by the universall voice of mankind: But the sence which they have in scripture, reacheth much further. That which seemes there to be triviall is full of rarities, which are not perceivable to all sorts of spirits. If there be question of a passage which speaks of death, the world is full of preachers which will give a description thereof, which will declaim in a patherick manner, and will say all that which the simple know well enough: But this is but to touch the superficies of scripture. Sometimes it pronounceth proverbs taken from the mouth of common people, nay of Pagan authors; but it heightneth the sence thereof, and referres to an end farre more noble. Many Philosophers might have conceived the same morall precepts, nay in the same tearmes with scripture, but not to animate them with a sence so high, and so compleat. This is the admirable art of the Holy Ghost, to hide the rarest mysteries under the appearance of the most common matters. VVe

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reserve the examples hereof to another discourse.

The ignorant who believe that all the substance of a passage consists in that which is therein vulgar, the understanding whereof is easie, imagineth they understand it very well, and think they comprehend all the sense thereof. The opinion they have of this easinesse abuseth them. VVhen one finds a passage which seems so easie, one may assure himself, that there is some notable difficulty in it. Those which seem most clear, are very often most obscure. If there be any thing which seems to be clear and intelligible, such are similitudes taken from common and sensible things, as of a sower; of a net cast into the sea; of a grain of mustard-seed; of leaven put in meal, &c. Those comparisons because they are familiar are even contemptible to the veriest ideots; and there is none of them which attributes not to himself the understanding thereof; notwithstanding, it may be there are few men that comprehend the full sense thereof: not to speak in the simi-

mi-

militude of the Potter, that of the wild olive used by Saint *Paul* upon the subject of the calling of the Gentiles, hath divers branches marvelously high, whereunto all cannot attain.

One may referre hither divers subjects which seem to be within the cognisance of humane arts and sciences, As the *Pleia-des* and other Celestiall signes mentioned in *Job*, for Astrologie. The remedie applied upon the Carbuncle of *Ezekiah*, and the third day observed for the most painfull, in the wound of the *Sichemites*, for Physick. The statue of *Nebuchadnezzar*, for buriall. The temple, and royall houses of *Solomon*, for Architecture; & an infinitenesse of points which belong to Naturall Philosophy. In effect there's no doubt but the Scripture contains in it many admirable secrets of this quality: but this is but the bark of a marrow more substantiall and wholsome.

## CHAP. 2.

*Of matters which seeme unprofitable in Scripture. Considerations upon Chronologie, upon the Genealogies, Proper names, Ceremoniall Laws, Rules, Particularities little considerable in appearance, and histories of enormous Acts.*

**T**O understand the Scripture 'tis not enough to know what it saith; 'Tis necessary also to know why it saith it. For the discourse thereof tends oftentimes to abut the words expresse not. There is nothing so cleare as the Morall law; the precepts thereof are evident; there is no man so brutish, which understands not very well when it speaks of honouring father and mother, of abstaining from homicide, from false witnesse, &c. Notwithstanding Saint Paul saith, this law was covered with a veil, and that the Jews could not see Moses face. They did comprehend well the sense thereof; but saw not the aim there.

thereof, which seemed to contradict even the language and the appearance of it. For the law promised life to him that fulfilled it; and yet notwithstanding this was not the intention of the Law to induce us to search for life by the fulfilling thereof. Our Lord said, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*: and notwithstanding this proposition tended to an end quite different, to wit that we should not hope for salvation by observation of the commandments. The same ought to be observed in divers other passages.

The Scripture is full of an infinity of matters, which considered in themselves, seem to be wholly unprofitable, or at least of very little importance, if one take not heed at what they aim at. It is true that some are either more profitable, or more considerable then others; our Lord himself distinguisheth the greater commandments from the lesser. Without doubt the history of Christs passion is more necessary then that of *Sampson*, or the victories of *David*, or the description of *Solomons* Pa-

lace. If it be so that the Scripture contains nothing superfluous, there is neither a tache, nor a goats haire in all the Tabernacle, which serves not to the perfection of it.

To this purpose are the accounts of the yeares, which the Scriptures observe so punctually. It were a very great brutishnesse to be ignorant, whether the world hath continued a long time, and how. The dayes of the ancient Fathers, and the measure of the following ages, which the holy history calculates so exactly, give us their chronology. The 430 years which expired the very night the Hebrews came out of *Egypt*, published the immutable truth of God, whose promise failed not to be effected at the named day. The thirtieth year of Jesus Christ, wherein he began to exercise the Office of a redeemer, was the age in which the Priests entred into their charge. The periods which are observed from the creation to the flood, from the flood to the promise, from the promise to the Law, from the Law to the building of the Temple, from thence to the captivity,

tain her aterna- of it. f the e so ish- world The sea- ho- us ex- out th f- ar e r-  
 ny, and from the captivity to Christ; their extent, their number, their relation and proportion are all full of wonders. Seven yeares were imployed to the conquest of *Canaan*, Seven yeares to build the Temple, seventie yeares it was in raising, seven times seven yeares they were hindred from rebuilding it, and seven times seventy years in the whole, (which are the weekes of *Daniel*) it stood till the second destruction; which happened the tenth of *August*, which was the very day wherein it had been ruined the first time, more then five hundred fifty years before. The life of *Moses* is found equally divided into three, forty yeares he was a Courier in *Egypt*; forty yeares a shepherd in *Madian*; forty yeares a conductor of the people in the wilderness.

The same harmony we observe in times, is seen in generations. *Moses* the Lawgiver, was the seventh man after *Abraham*, to whom God gave the promises; *Abraham* the seventh from *Heber*, of whom the Hebrews are descended; *Heber* the seventh

from *Enoch*, the first that was caught up to heaven; *Enoch* the seventh from *Adam*. Ten generations from the Creation to the flood; ten generations from the flood to the promise. From *Abraham* to *David* fourteen generations, from *David* to the captivity fourteen generations, from the captivity to Christ fourteen generations, which make in all, forty two, and answer the forty two journeys of the Israelites, from their departure from *Egypt* to the land of *Canaan*. But moreover, these Genealogies serve to shew us, besides the originall of every nation, that which brought forth to us the Son of God; for it was a matter of importance that his people, his tribe, and his familie, whereof he was to be born, should be exactly marked out. Hereunto serves the catalogue of so many persons, the number whereof is found in Scripture.

But besides this list of names in Genealogies, we read there are an infinitenesse of others, the knowledge whereof seems not to be of great fruit; yet notwithstanding  
can



we can shew their importance in divers examples. It sufficerh me to note by the by, that which may be without much disguise, how we ought to understand the rehearsal of our Lord, touching *Lazarus*, and the wicked rich man, to wit, whether in tearmes of history, or in form of a parable; whether it may be thought that *Lazarus* by changing of the dialect, is the proper name of *Eleazar* the servant of *Abraham*. Thus Jesus Christ placeth *Lazarus* in the bosome, or at the table of this Patriarch, whose household servant he had been. It may be there is a secret *Antithesis* between the quality of this wicked rich man, who is represented, as being of the blood of *Abraham*, whose son he is called, and that quality of the other who was but a servant. That Maxim which imports that every narration wherein is exprest the proper name of some one, ought to be taken for historie, is not alwayes to be received.

I will not stay long to shew what use there is at this day of the Ceremoniall  
Laws

Lawes of the Old Testament. This subject requires a longer discourse, I will only say that this is one of the richest cabbiners of Divinity, full of inestimable Jewells; but one ought to be very expert, to know the kinds, the properties, the use, and the value of every one of them. Jesus Christ is there painted out unto us, in divers tables, which serve us to convince the blindness of the Jews. The numbring up of divers sins, for which this Law ordained sacrifices, is an assurance to them that are guilty thereof, that they may obtain pardon. Such a one as being fallen into perjury, believes he hath committed a sin which the Scripture pronounceth unpardonable, hath found a remedie against despaire, hearing the Ceremoniall Law, which prescribes a sinne Offering altogether expresse in favor of wilfull perjury, which it would not do, were this crime unpardonable.

We find also in the Old Testament many rules, and narrations, which serve in shew, neither for faith, nor manners, nor for our comfort. This is seen principally

ally in the books of *Moses*, that the most important matters are touched but in few words, And on the contrary, divers mean things, and lesse considerable, are there represented at length. The redemption by the Messias which God promised Man, immediately after his fall ; the calling of the Gentiles foretold to *Abraham* ; the Priesthood of *Melchisedech*, the most illustrious figure of *Christ* ; and many other points of soveraigne doctrine, are set downe there but very briefly. Whereas the birth of *Ismael*, the contract of *Isaacs* marriage, and the like histories, are there delivered largely, even to the smallest particulars. I give hereof this reason, that the Church being in the age of infancy her instruction ought to consist more in rudiments, then in high and hard lessons, for she was not then capable thereof. But it may be demanded what use may be made by reading them at this day ? It is all full of mysteries. The onely historie of *Agar* and *Ismael*, interpreted by Saint *Paul*, even to the meanest circumstances, shews what we

may judge of all other histories of the Old Testament, although we see not what they aim at. God would teach us great things by small. Divers particulars of small consequence, which the Scriptures declare very largely, serve to make us see how many admirable effects have proceeded from frivolous occasions: witnesse *Jacobs* primogeniture. The law forbidding to *take the old, & the young birds*, to wit in their nests, *to unmuzzle the ox that treads out the corn*, & the like lawes extend further then they seem. The New Testament mentions the *parchments*. and *cloak* of Saint *Paul*; the counsell he gives *Timothy*, *to use a little wine for the weaknesse of his stomack*; the burying of the wicked rich man, where that of *Lazarus* is omitted; and in divers histories many circumstances which the vulgar hold to be unprofitable for want of knowing their causes. The act of *Jesus Christ* stretching forth the hand to touch the leper appeared not considerable but to them who knew the Law by which this touching was declared a defilement. The same Law  
forbad

the Old Testament, who represented Je-  
sus Christ, to enter into any house wherein  
there was any dead: yet notwithstanding  
our Lord himself touched the bier; nay the  
dead body, to wit the daughter of *Jairus*.

VVemay find in these particulars an  
incomparable richnesse of doctrine.

'Tis not enough to know the generall  
intention of a passage; each of them hath a  
particular end. There is one meaning of the  
burning bush, another of the living crea-  
tures painted out in the vision of *Ezekiel*.  
The Psalmist speaking of the food which  
God provides for beasts, makes mention of  
young ravens, rather then of other souls of  
the aire, for a speciall reason. The Revelati-  
on represents not Christ to all the Church-  
es, under the same figure. To one it shews  
the stars, and the golden Candlesticks; to  
another, it makes it see the two edged  
sword; to another flaming eyes, and the  
feet as of brasse. His titles are divers ac-  
cording to the diversity of subjects. Many  
know in generall, that the ceremonies fi-  
gure out Christ, but know not how, and  
in

in what quality each of them represent him. There is none of them which hath not, besides the generall intention of the Law, their particular aime and reason, for want of understanding them distinctly, makes the reading of them contemptible, and envied by the common people.

Many also not knowing at what the Scripture aimes, are astonished at the recital of divers enormous things which it particulariseth so carefully. I put not in this rank those which are symbolical; as the commandement made to *Hosea*, that he should get unto him a whore, this is but a parable. But the incest of *Judas* with his sons wife seems fitter to have been buried with him, then to be inserted in the holy history, even with so many shamefull and horrid circumstances: yet notwithstanding if one heed the arrogance of the Jews, which insolently glory of their extraction, who ground even their election and divine alliance on the vertues of their Patriarks; One shall find this error cannot be better refuted, nor this pride better taken down, then by

by making them see the proceedings of  
their father, guilty of a thousand filthy  
acts.

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### CHAP. III.

*Of the method which seems defective in many discourses of Scripture. Of the stile thereof. Of superfluous words. Of strange similitudes. Of the imitation of Scripture language. Of mysterious omissions.*

**T**Here are found many discourses in the Scripture which seem to be without order, and without connexion, built with pieces ill joyned, nay (in the judgement of the ignorant) extravagant, and from the purpose.

The Lamentations of *Jeremy*, a number of Psalmes, divers Sermons of our Lord, some Epistles of the Apostles, keep not in appearance any regular method. Many subjects seem ranked confusedly in  
history

history, unlesse one see their subjects, the connection, and their aim, as in the Apology of Saint *Stephen*, and other places. One may take notice of censures made as it seemeth out of season, nay, which is more, divers answers which concern not the queries, and in no wayes touch the question proposed. The vulgar interpreters are much troubled when they must expound such passages; and shew themselves ridiculous, endeavouring to reduce them to the ordinary rules of their Logick: By this meanes they give them a contrary and forced sense. What may be said upon this subject cannot be comprehended in this abridgement; I will touch but one point thereof for example of all the rest.

Sometimes it is said in the Gospell, that Jesus answered, where notwithstanding it appeareth not by any circumstance of Scripture that any had spoke unto him. Some are astonished then, why it is said he answered, when none had asked him. I take this term not for a bare Hebraisme, but indeed for a proposall relative to another.



thers. Now many which opened not their mouth in the presence of Jesus Christ, ceased not to speake in the secret of their heart, but their thoughts being known to him, he answered the subject of their thoughts.

We ought also to observe, that where the Scripture oft-times breaks off that which seems should have followed, in the thred of the same discourse, and inserts a subject quite different, whereof the hearers never thought ; If the construction thereof be not alwaies Grammaticall, it is reall ; consisting more in the coherence of mysteries then in the forme of words.

In that which the Scripture saith one ought even to consider why it speaks in such tearms ; for when it expresseth the same thing by divers names, this diversitie of words representeth alwaies some diversitie of qualitie in the same subject. Such a thing is called by one name in one passage, which is otherwise named in another, and this for a notable cause. *Moses* (*Exod.* 3.) asked what was the name of God, that

is to say, in what qualitie he should speak; whether as *Elohim*, or as *Jehovah*, or as *Shadai*, or *Adma*, or according to some other name by which he is called. It is to be noted, that the title of *Jehovah*, which is translated *Lord*, was not given him in all the Scripture touching the Creation, but onely after the making of man. In one place the Scripture saith, that Jesus Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; In another, that he standeth at the right hand of God. I have before spoken of the redundants which seeme to be in Scripture. When it saith that such a man lived so many years, and then died; These two last words seeme to be superfluous, which containe notwithstanding a substantiall addition. It gives this Epitaph but to the Patriarchs which lived before the flood; Of all those which died after *Noah*, it saith barely, such a man lived so many yeares, without adding that he died; Which thing is considerable. It is to be observed also, whether the Scripture it selfe speaks, or whether some body els speake in it. The  
similitude

similitude which compares God to a man that was dead asleep with too much drink, is but an echo, or an Ironicall repetition of the idolaters language, who spake of God in those jolly rearmes. It is to be noted also, that the Scripture sometime expresseth a thing by its contrary; As when one is accused to have blessed God, to denote the most horrible impiety that may be; These observations require many others, which we omit.

I will speake onely one word of a question that may be made, to wit, whether wee may not accustome our selves to write, and speak the same style with the Scripture. There are found some that affect its language, and assay to counterfeit its voyce to authorize their dreams, and make them passe for Oracles; But they are barbarisms in divinitie have made those drezmes be accounted for strange. It were therefore to be wished, that those that speak according to the truth of Scripture, had also the phrase, and language thereof. A Sermon woven not with superfluous, or imperti-

nent quotations, but with rearms, and speeches of the Holy Ghost, joyned, and ranked in their proper places, nips off the lustre of the most eloquent pieces. A collection which might be made upon all sorts of subjects, continuall reading, a method fit for this purpose, are a memorie ready, and present to occurrences, a judicious spirit, and long experience might frame the habit thereof. But we must observe, that as the Scripture often hides an extraordinarie sense under a common phrase, wee may well have the same words of it, though not alwaies in so losly a sence. There is for example, sometimes a reproofe, or a doctrine, al whose words imply some propheticie which concernes not at all the present time, or any prediction whereof the accomplishment is to us unknown. We may truly pronounce the same words as the Scripture, but in our mouth they are not Prophetical.

To close this Chapter, wee are not onely to consider what the Scripture saith. but also very often why it conceales certaine things

things, for in many places it speaketh even by silence; and its silence is significative. That which I would say concerns not those matters whereupon the least curious may raise questions, as upon the day of Christs Nativity; his actions from his infancy to his twelfth yeare, and from that time to his age of thirty yeares; and other points whereof the holy history speakes not. It may bee disputed also why the tribe of *Dan* is omitted. *Revel. 7.* in a Catalogue where all others are so expressly named. But the sole omission of *Melchisedechs* Genealogie, of his birth, and death, shew that the very silence of Scripture is mysterious, including the image of Christs eternity. I doubt not but it containes many other examples of this kind, though our eye cannot see them all.

## CHAP. III.

*Of infused knowledge. Of Apostleship. Of those that know nothing but by books.*

**I**Lay aside the question whether the gifts of prophetic have wholly ceased. We call a Prophet not him which foretells what is to come, as the vulgar understand, but him which hath graces extraordinarily infused, for the understanding, and interpretation of the divine mysteries. These lights are not given at this day in so eminent a degree as heretofore; but it may be they are not wholly extinguished, though they are rare, and communicated to very few persons. 'Tis not enough to object, that there may be found some sublime divine, whose knowledge proceeds not from study, so much as other mens. The heavenly influences may descend as well into a library, as into a wilderness; *Daniel* studied on *Jeremy* when the Angel came to speake unto him. *St. Paul* amidst the ordinary inspirations of Gods spirit,

spirit, even after he had bin in the third  
 heaven, desired that *Timothy* should send  
 him the books. Tis true when a man at  
 this day hath so much spirituall wisdome,  
 as the chiefe Apostles, if he hath nor the  
 same authority, nor the Prerogatives  
 which wereto them personall, and cannot  
 be transmitted by any ritle of succession.  
 No man can be qualified as an Apostle,  
 unlesse he had seene Jesus Christ raised  
 from the dead, to the end he might speake  
 as an eye witnesse. This served as a pre-  
 tence to St. *Pauls* enemies, to dispure his  
 Apostleship, alleadging that he being con-  
 verted only after the ascension of our Lord,  
 he could not have seene him. But he had  
 seen him in heaven; and in this very thing  
 he had a very great advantage above the o-  
 ther Apostles, which saw him not but upon  
 the earth. To come to our mark; although  
 that divine knowledge is no more com-  
 municated but by ordinary meanes, and  
 above all, by the reading of divers au-  
 thours, I cannot hold them for great di-  
 vines, whose knowledge consists but in a

bare remembrance of what they have read. Much reading, and a good memory make not a knowing man. They that cannot say but what they have read have not the true gift of Prophecie; yet lesse, those poore ignorants which learne by heart o-  
 other mens Sermons. Such shouldrs are not capable to beare the arke of God.

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# CHAP. V.

*Of eloquence. The principall part thereof is unknowne by the greatest part of Preachers. Of vulgar matters in Sermons. The excuse and deceit of ignorant Preachers. Whether the word of God be in like lustre in the mouthes of all.*

**T**He first, and principall quality required in a Bishop, is to be didactick, to be capable to teach excellent matters, and to handle them powerfully, and properly. I stand not on them who under colour of the simplicity of the Scripture condemne absolutely the use of eloquence  
 in



the interpretation thereof. Certainly  
 an effeminate discourse woven with flow-  
 ers, variagated with colours, and wantonly  
 adorned, is futable to the vulgar, as a pop-  
 pet to little children, is incompetible with  
 the Majesty of the Gospel. But a masculine,  
 and vigorous eloquence cloathed with  
 sumptuous ornaments, and alwayes more  
 naturall then artificiall, is not onely con-  
 venient but also necessary for a Minister.  
 Nay hee is unworthy to speake in the  
 Church, which cannot speake eloquent-  
 ly. They that are herein defective, are ac-  
 customed to blame in an other that which  
 they themselves see doth well. For there  
 is no man so brutish who desires not, when  
 he speakes in publique, to expresse himself  
 in the best tearmes hee can. Furthermore  
 the vulgar give oftentimes the reputation  
 of eloquence to many which have not the  
 very shadow of it. So a man heapes toge-  
 ther abundance of words, with a fine  
 stile, though he hath not any true Rhetor-  
 icke, he shall passe in the esteeme of the  
 ignorant for a great Oratour. But that  
 which

which is more considerable, the principall piece of eloquence consisteth not in figures, and other ornaments of language; It lyes in that which is called invention, and in the choice of matter which is the stuffe of a discourse. A weake understanding is moved with representations, and tragicall descriptions, with exclamations, gestures, and other passionate actions: But a man of understanding will be instructed with reasons. And this is folly to move the affections without instructing the understanding; a proceeding contrary to the naturall order which God hath established amongst the faculties of the Soule, and the disposition which the Holy Ghost keepes in our sanctification. The devotion which such discourses kindle in the hearers, is a fire of chaffe, which lasts but during the Sermon; But the true instruction which must be given to the understanding, consisteth not in vulgar matters. When a Preacher hath said that we must believe in God, that every man is a sinner, that Jesus Christ is come into the world,  
and

shall turne and widen this discourse  
 with many words, without producing up-  
 on such points any thing, but which is al-  
 ready common and knowne to his au-  
 thors, I doe not thinke that he hath in-  
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 when hee is taught but that which hee  
 knowes already, though one tell it him in  
 diuers words, and different phrases. The  
 most familiar, and most notable points for  
 Christians, such as are the Precepts of the  
 Decalogue, and the Articles of the Creed,  
 include an infinite number of rare mat-  
 ters, so that a scribe that is knowing in that  
 which concernes the Kingdome of Hea-  
 ven, may alwaies draw thence new things.  
 The Psalmist who prayed that he might  
 be cleare sighted to discover the wonders  
 of the law, knew that it contained much  
 more then moralities naturally knowne  
 to men. They which treat of the points  
 of religion so lightly, present you with the  
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 chers

chers, which they put in the eares, and mouth of the common people is this, that they Preach the word of God, and that therefore one ought to content himselfe with their doctrine, though it be triviall, and one ought not to bee troubled with their frequent repetitions, nor disdain their grosse stile, and other defects which are found in their discourses. VVhereunto I shall onely say, that tis an abuse of the people to say, that a mans Sermon is the word of God. It is but the interpretation thereof; which if it be defective, or confused, or darke, or foolish, or extravagant, doth injure more the word of God then it receives authority there-from. This colour they give their ignorance, serveth to foment that of the people, the greater part whereof content themselves with that they know of religion, and even make a scruple to learne more. One of the deceipts by which many Preachers are accustomed to hide this defect is this, to take a text of three words, upon which they  
inlarge

enlarge themselves in digressions, mixing all the old and new Testament, reducing all divinity into one Sermon, and there is no matter so remote from the subject, which either by hooke or by crooke they force not to their purpose. So that once a valiant expositor of Scripture imployed forty yeares in interpreting the Prophet *Esay*. The prolixity whereby they affect to appeare as Giants who neede a whole Acre of ground to stretch themselves upon, is of no great fruit. A succinct, and nervous discourse, nay one sole reason very pertinent, or one rare, or extraordinary conception couched in few words, shall rather convert a soule, or shall grave thereon more lively impressions, then these vast discourses shall doe, more fruitfull in words then matter. VVe have many Sermons of Jesus Christ, and some of his Apostles : But the longest of them may be pronounced in the space of halfe an houre. Finally not to touch on the repetitions, wherewith many fill their auditoryes, we shall find them which will be  
exa2

exact to the dividing of a graine of sand,  
 by so small distinctions, and divisions, that  
 they themselves can scarce discern them.  
 If in lieu of the vulgar method, which un-  
 der colour of desiring to say all that con-  
 cernes a text, yet teacheth nothing but  
 things common and a thousand times re-  
 peated, if a Preacher could find only  
 three, or foure observations which are  
 rare, and but little knowne, his auditors  
 might say they had learned that which  
 they knew not, And one such Sermon  
 were worth a hundred others : & although  
 the ignorant thinke that this doth much  
 advantage to have a multitude of Ser-  
 mons, at the end whereof they are as  
 knowing as they were at the beginning.  
 Many also have a superstitious opinion  
 touching Preachers, that one ought not to  
 be more sought after, or more willingly  
 heard then an other, because all Preach  
 the word of God, and that it is of the same  
 weight, and same vertue in the mouthes of  
 all. Now tis true that all make profes-  
 sion to carry the same sword of truth ; but  
 all



sand all doe not mannage it with the same  
 s, that skill, nor with the like force of arme. From  
 hem. whence it comes to passe that it cutteth  
 n un- not equally in all hands, nay in many it is,  
 con- as a plate of leade. Of a thousand which  
 but handle the same passage of Scripture, it is  
 s re- impossible to find two amongst them  
 only which are wholly alike in conceptions, in  
 n are the order and frame of discourse. In so  
 itors much that representing the same sub-  
 hich ject, they give it so divers faces, that even  
 mon they themselves are different in shape. But  
 ough those which keepe the resemblance there-  
 ach of nearer the life, are to be preferred be-  
 Ser- fore others, which shew but the draughts  
 e as of it grossly delineated.

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## C H A P. VI.

*That the words of Scripture had more Emphasis in the mouth of Jesus Christ, and his first Disciples, then they have in ours. The reason of this difference.*

**I**Ts true that all those to whom Jesus Christ himselfe Preached when he was conversant upon earth were not converted. The most eminent Apostles complained that few persons received their Preaching; yet neverthelesse tis certaine that the word of God had greater efficacy in their mouthes, then now it hath in ours. If it converted not all them who heard it, it made it selfe felt by the most hardned, as a burning cautery even within the very entrailles. But besides, the progresse thereof was altogether different. One onely exhortation of St. *Peter* brought in one day three thousand Jewes to the Church; And by an other Sermon he gained five thousand soules. If at this day wee pronounce the same Sermon word by word  
in

in an assembly of Jewes, it will not have the same successe. Although wee found the same discourse, nay the proper expresse, and formall words, as Jesus Christ, or some of his Apostles have sometimes, uttered them, they have not such vertue as they had when they themselves pronounced them *viva voce*. When the Sonne of God speake, there was felt an extraordinary working and force that never was upon the lipps of mortall man. The Apostles whom he had animated with his owne vertue, spake also as out of thunder, and as cherubins of glory. The sound of their wings was as the noyse of great waters, and as the voice of God Almighty when he speakes. If we would know from whence proceeds such vertue, it may be some will say it consisted rather in their moralls then in their words; And that their supernaturall works which were seene to be done by them were the onely cause that rendred their discourse more efficacious, then that of other men; but it appears to the contrary, by the testimony of them

to whom Jesus Christ spake in the way to *Emaus*, For although they knew him not, so farre were they short of seeing any miracle, their heart burned within them, as hee expounded to them the Scriptures. These reasons may be given hereof; that the Son of God, who knew al the thoughts of his hearers, stricke directly within them; and they could not but be moved, when they heard a voice which surprized their most secret thoughts. That the same spirit which spake in his Disciples, touched with his words that which men thought was closely hid within their hearts: an example in *Ananias*, and *Zaphira*, whereunto may be referred that we read in the first to the *Corinthes* 14. 24. and 25. that their breast was ful of flames, and the words which came from them lighted as at a fornace, did burne as live sparks, nay as burning brans. And finally, that their tongues were touched immediately with the finger of God, having wholly an other force then ours, which are not touched therewith, but at a distance, and by  
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the interposition of many judgements, nay feeble, and light.

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## CHAP. VII.

*What men are most hardly saved. Of the vulgar error which imports that the Pastors manners edifie asmuch as his doctrine.*

**A**N antient father said of his time, that in his opinion there were not many Churchmen, or Pastors that were saved. This may seeme strange. But if we may say there are men for whom it is difficult to be saved, they are those which have the charge of soules. For to save themselves, they ought to save many others. For whom it sufficeth not to have piety, and other vertues which are common to all other Christians. Their is need of knowledge, and eloquence. The want of morall vertues ( which alwayes render it more criminall ) repugneth not the essence of his office, nor abateth the

dignity of the Sacraments, nor the efficacy of the word which he administred. Ignorance is the most formall crime of him who ought to instruct others. A good man may be a bad Pastor. The vulgar hold for a maxime, That the good life of a Preacher edifieth as much, or more then his doctrine. This error is truly popular, and more foolish then can be imagined. Its true that workes ought to accompany words, and woe to that man who practiseth not his owne doctrine. But this is impiety to thinke that the actions of a Pastor are more considerable, more perfect, or of greater edification then his doctrine which is the rule ; which is more essentiall to his charge, more fruitfull in instruction, more necessary to salvation, either the seeing of his example, or the hearing his word ? Is the example of a man of greater weight then the Ordinance of God ? Is it from the Pastors example that wee receive the faith, or from his Preaching ? Are his good works the power of God to salvation ? Doe they containe the remission

emission of our sins ? Shall we be saved  
by them or by his doctrine ? He which  
stands more efficacy in a mans example then  
in the word of Jesus Christ is not worthy  
to be his Disciple.

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### CHAP. VIII.

*That it is more profitable for us to be taught  
by men then by Angels. why the world va-  
lues not prophets, but after their death.*

**M**Any could wish they might bee  
taught by Angels, thinking that  
their instructions will be more profitable,  
and their word more efficacious. Where-  
in they are deceived. For there are divers  
points whereof the Angels cannot speake  
with so great feeling, nor with a know-  
ledge so particular as men. The diseases of  
the body, and other kinds of the crosse, the  
burthen of sinne, the terrors of conscience,  
the horrors of death, the combat of the  
flesh against the spirit, repentance it self,

and regeneration, are things whereof they have no experience, and therefore cannot be touched with such compassion towards sinners, as men who feele the same infirmities. This is a reason why the sonne of God would take upon him our infirmities, to the end hee might have the more compassion, and speake with greater efficacy ; furthermore that Angell which appeared to *Cornelius* the Centurion, would not undertake to instruct him, but sent him for this purpose to a sinfull mortall man. This is the custome of the world, and examples thereof are frequent in all ages, to undervalue, or even persecute Prophets while they live, and to adore them after death. The reason is, that the eye of the flesh seeth in them the same visage as in other men, the same naturall infirmities, and a contemptible appearance ; especially if he be in his owne country, or amidst his familiars. *Saul* asked *Samuel*, whether he was a man of God, not knowing that he was so, because he saw nothing extraordinary in his person. The bald  
head



they head of *Elisbai* served as an object of mockery to the little children. Many that looked on *St. Paul* as absent, said that his presence had not so much force as his writings. On the other side, the most eminent servants of God, are they against whom Satan hath prepared most ambushes. The liberty of their censures renders them odious. He that revered yesterday *John* the Baptist, willingly procured his imprisonment, or death; but after that God had taken them into his rest, and that there was nothing remaining but the sound of their voice, which seemeth to eccho still in their graves, the world regrets at what it hath lost, and endeavours to expiate its ingratitude with excessive honours. *Chrysostome* was accused of adultery, condemned, chased out of his Church, and confined in banishment, where finally hee dyed. The children of them which had driven him away fell downe on their knees before the dead body, and desired pardon of it for their parents. Such also have builded rich tombs

in memory of the just, who had persecuted them in their lives. Great were the advantages of them who were conversant with the sonne of God, who might heare him speaking with open mouth, propose unto him the most difficult doubts, and questions, and learne from his mouth an infinite number of sublime, and unheard-of doctrines. But they payd him with outrages; and many honour him at this day, who would have helped to have crucified him, if they had bin in his time.

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## CHAP. IX.

### *The want of particular instructions.*

**A**LL the instruction which is sought for at this day from the mouth of Preachers, is reduced to Sermons. The most excellent amongst them, out of the pulpit, is no more then a private man in the judgement of the vulgar. The common people believe that publique instructions  
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are sufficient for them ; and as for the rest every Christian may order his actions according as they conform to them. There is none so sottishly ignorant who doth not think himselfe capable to direct his owne conscience. Notwithstanding mans life is full of occurrents, wherein the wisest are subject to deceive themselves; and the most conscientious, by trusting overmuch to their owne judgement, commit notable faults in the conduct of their affairs, of household government, or trading, of judicature, of publique policy, and other vocations. Witnesse *Dauids* heedlesnesse, in causing the *Arke* to bee carryed upon his owne Chariot. Moreover publique instructions cannot expresse so many circumstances which often change the quality of actions. And which is more, not onely the points which lye in practise, but also those which concern meerely beliefe, being composed in publique, frame not alwayes in the mind of the hearers so exact an impression, as particular instruction; auricular confession, if it had not passed  
into

into superstition, was an exercise of great profit.

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## C H A P. X.

*Of books of religion, and of the time imployed in them to the prejudice of Scripture. Of the multitude, vanity, kinds and reformation of them.*

**A**Mongst the abuses which keepe up the ignorance of the vulgar, wee account also the reading of so many religious books, whereunto the common people give their time, and thoughts, as to an exercise of great edification, although the books of a good divine containe in substance the same matters which are in Scripture. Who soever shall read in *Origen*, or *Nazianzene*, the sacrifice of *Abraham* curiously painted out with all its circumstances, with a representation as patheticke as Rhetoricke can furnish it with, shal never be so lively touched there-  
with

with as by the simple recitall of *Moyſes*.  
 A paraphraſe of the new Teſtament, is but  
 a dead Letter, in compariſon of the viva-  
 city of the Text. All this is ſaid without  
 derogating from the merit of ſo many  
 learned pens, ancient and moderne, which  
 have travelled to ſet us at eaſe. Their  
 works have converted many ſouls; the  
 writing of a man powerfull in ſpirit,  
 preach, as well as his voice. But this eulo-  
 gie appertains not to all them who un-  
 dertake to write; And all the authors, e-  
 ven thoſe which are worth the reading,  
 are not for the vulgar. Beſides the books  
 which may ſerve to inſtruct the common  
 people, are made hurtfull by their quanti-  
 ty. The number is become ſo exorbitant,  
 and ſtill multiplied daily in ſuch abun-  
 dance, that the greater part of Chriſtians  
 imploye ten times as much time in this  
 reading, as in that of the Bible. That fa-  
 mous Doctor *Luther* had in hatred his own  
 books, and wiſhed that they were buried,  
 for feare the readers ſhould ſpend that  
 time in them they ought in the Scripture.

I am not of their opinion who regret the losse of so many books of the ancient fathers, and other writings which time hath caused to vanish. On the contrary, I think that this losse is a great gaine to us, and a discharge of many unprofitable burthens. The naturall history dictated by *Solomon*, and divers other writings mentioned in Scripture it selfe, were never lost without the particular providence of God, which would not that his Church should bee overcharged with so many volumes. Of all the Apostles there are but six whose writings have bin preserved; and yet it is certaine that the other Apostles were no lesse carefull to write to their flocks: Nay it is credible that those whose Epistles we have writ, many others, which the wisdom of God hath suppressed. Jesus Christ himselfe, writ not, nor would that all his miracles should be comprized in the history, lest their prolixity should exceede the measure of our life, and the capacity of our memory.

The reading the fathers is not a taske of  
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the vulgar. To understand them, you must know the history of their times. There occur in this field an infinite number of particulars, and matters which serve for no use at this day, and even many which are full of thornes, which the common people cannot handle without pricking themselves to the blood. If the fruits which are found scattered in this vast extension of the fathers were collected a part, and heaped together in one volume, this abridgement would be of great profit. But we are to speake of moderne Writers, the multitude whereof is prodigious.

Many books are reputed learned, which are more filled with word then matter. If from all the books in divinity which goe up and downe the world, there be taken away the repetitions, the amplifications, the superfluous allegations, and a million of intire volumes great and small which declare nothing, but what so many others have said before, the residue will be very few. One may say of the greatest part of them, that whosoever hath read one, hath  
read

read them all. There are alwayes the same conceptions, the same reasons; saving that the words are different. That which one calls dirt, the other nameth dung. Where they differ onely in the order, transposing what others have said, and disguising it with other transisions, conjunctions, or with some pleasing point. All this with a new title makes men think that this booke is altogether new. The world is full of writers, and there is not a pedant which will not be one. For so that a man fill up much paper, this is enough to get a great reputation. I know one that to attaine to this, used the following method, which is common to him with many others. To make a treatise, of controversie, or commentary (which is at this day as a bridge for asses) he had upon the table five, or sixe divers authors, tocke one line from one, and another from an other, and beating all together, then adding thereto some Hebrew word transcribed out of the Dictionary, and a long thrud of passages out of the fathers, made a composition, upon  
which



which he wrote his name; And the ignorant said behold the Commentaries of N. upon the Psalmes, or upon some of the smaller Prophets. It were a great good for the publique that none should write, but he that had very rare conceptions, or so little common that they might be held for new. One onely extraordinary observation comprehended in ten or twelve lines, is more worth then all the great tomes out of which nothing that is new can be learned.

All the books that can be written in divinity, are either doctrinall, or morall, or historicall, or of prophecie, or of controversy, or mixed and composed of all these together, or of many of them. The forme thereof is divers; Commentaries, common places, meditations, formes of prayer, homilies, discourses of vertues, and vices, and the like particular treatise. As for controversies I have thereof said my opinion. Also for commentaries, two or three for the most part suffice, taken from amongst the rest, who for the most part have

have more of Grammar then divinity, and  
 found of nothing but repetitions. The  
 same choice is necessary amongst authors  
 which handle all Religion heaped together  
 in a body. Amongst so many bookes of  
 meditations, there are scarce two which  
 containe any rarity. There are seene ma-  
 ny words set out to say that which the  
 world knoweth already well enough.  
 There is likewise a great multitude of  
 Sermons which run from hand to hand.  
 The vulgar often admire Preachers, who  
 putting what they say in writing, you  
 shall find that they have said nothing ex-  
 traordinary. We have seene Homilies  
 dictated by great personages, in whom be-  
 side the wide, and rampant style, you  
 meete with even childish discourses; but  
 the world will be deceived. The expositi-  
 ons upon the decalogue, the Creed, and  
 Lords Prayer, are the subject of infinite  
 treatyes wherein you shall scarcely find a-  
 ny thing, but repetitions from some o-  
 ther, and matters very common. As for  
 formes of prayer fitted to particulars,  
 although

although their ayme be rather to frame a Christians practise in this exercise, then to give him instruction, if it appertaines not to all to give their conceptions for rules, and prescribe the forme, and words an other ought to use in speaking to God. But furthermore, they which spend all their time in this kind of reading, shall abide alwaies in an ignorant devotion.

This would be an inestimable good; if instead of so many volumes which steale away the greatest part of our life, we had a collection of the rarest secrets in Religion, separated from all vulgar matters, and freed from all these masses of words. Such a worke would teach us more in one day, then so many others could doe in an age. I shall willingly subscribe to their advise who have said that this would bee the richest piece that hath bin put out since the Apostles time. Its true that those have not observed the true field from whence these matters must be taken, but it is easie to be found.

## C H A P. XI.

*Great knowledge lieth not in the quantity of matters, but in their quality. The title of great divines given fasly to many.*

**B**Y the common voice, that man is held for a great divine, who knowes the languages necessary to this profession; who understands Philosophie, who hath read the fathers, and can relate what they thought upon every point of religion; who is versed in ecclesiasticall History; who is ready in controversies, in schoole distinctions and subtilities, besides the exact knowledge of common places which are in use, bordured with texts of Scripture, and stuf with other allegations. But all these qualities together cannot make a great Divine but in reputation. This is truly a great advantage to heare the Prophets, and God himselfe in the same language wherein they spake. 'Tis certaine that the Scripture is pure, and more emphaticke

phaticke in its originall tongues, then in any translation. But the onely knowledge of tongues supplyes but a Grammaticall understanding, wherein many Jewes and Greeks may excel, without deserving the title of Divines. Good store of Philosophie sufficeth not; though a good Divine ought to be a good Philosopher. To know what *Tertull.* said, or what was *St. Austins* opinion, is not of the very essence of Divinity; so much doth it come short of being the highest degree thereof. Many that lived before all these fathers were in the world, ceased not to be as great Divines as they which have employed at this day thirty yeares in this reading of the fathers. The same is of History. Before the subject thereof was in the world, Divinity was compleate. A man endowed with memory, who can tell what heresies have reigned, what orders were made in such councils, what disputes or diversities have arose in Church Policie, &c. may bee held knowing in History; But this is follie to hold him in this respect, for an eminent Divine.

Divine. The knowledge of controversies, is accidental, and embraceth not all the dimensions of Religion. The knowledge of the most subtile points of Divinity reduced to the forme of art, a promptuary of ordinary passages, and arguments upon all kinds of subjects, are not sufficient neither to give us a great Divine. The idea thereof belongs to another discourse; whence we may learne That extraordinary knowledge consisteth not so much in the multitude of matters, as in the rarity of them.

I will now conclude this treatise of Popular Errors, that I may passe to a higher subject, and assay after this offering of goateshaire, to present you with scarlet for the ornament of the Sanctuary. Amen.

FINIS.